

Investigating the Impact and Potential of Urban Agriculture in the UK:

Observations from an Institution-led
Initiative in Wythenshawe, South
Manchester

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"Cash rules everything around me

C.R.E.A.M., get the money

Dollar dollar bill, y'all"

(Wu-Tang Clan)

List of Abbreviations

| | |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| CLS | Communities Living Sustainably |
| IMD | Index of Multiple Deprivation |
| LSOA | Lower Layer Super Output Area |
| MIF | Manchester International Festival |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| RFW | Real Food Wythenshawe |
| RHS | Royal Horticultural Society |
| UA | Urban Agriculture |
| WCHG | Wythenshawe Community Housing Group |

Abstract

Urban Agriculture (UA) has been promoted as an activity with the potential to bring food production closer to the point of consumption, to contribute to urban food security, strengthen community cohesion and to improve the mental and physical wellbeing of those involved. UA is often associated with informal, grassroots action; however more formal initiatives, often organised by large institutions or special interest groups, have become more common in recent years. While proponents cite assumed social benefits of formal UA, there is still much to be explored regarding the way in which the practice is perceived and experienced by its participants. As institution-led urban food projects proliferate across the UK amidst austerity-induced local authority cutbacks, it is important to consider not only how these imposed ventures affect the people they are intended to help, but also to unravel the motives and methods of those who manage the projects.

Real Food Wythenshawe (RFW) is an example of such a project and was awarded £1 million by the Big Lottery to pioneer the practice of UA in Wythenshawe, South Manchester. The project, which is run by staff at Wythenshawe Community Housing Group, seeks to encourage the people of Wythenshawe to grow and cook fresh, healthy, local food and has stimulated the development of several UA activities across the area. This research adopted a case study approach to seek an in-depth appreciation of how participants of two UA sites - a community garden and an urban farm - perceive and interact with growing spaces that have been developed or restored by RFW. It also explored the ambitions of the team who designed the project and the motivations driving its implementation.

Results presented here, show that RFW staff were motivated by a desire to help the local population and to change public perceptions of Wythenshawe, promoting it as a green and pleasant place to live. Growing group members were largely motivated to attend the growing sessions through a desire to help others and to socialise, which can be considered as a type of “Do It Yourself (DIY) citizenship” or “quiet sustainability”, whereby UA participants are not explicitly driven by a desire for radical social change. The resulting impacts experienced by those interviewed at both sites were wide-ranging and included increased growing knowledge leading to home-growing and sharing of produce, increased social confidence, strengthened community bonds, therapy and friendship. Results suggest

that volunteers at the urban farm may have had a more rewarding experience if they were afforded a greater sense of autonomy and ownership over the project activities. Similarly, the project may have been able to strengthen relationships with partnering organisations through a decentralisation of control and budget, which may have had the effect of increasing the initiative's impact and reach. These results are discussed with reference to the growing body of UA literature, and suggestions for future work place the initial findings within the context of the wider research framework.

Chapter 1

Introduction, Aim and Objectives

1.1. Introduction

As the effects of climate change, population growth, and competition for vital resources threaten the future of global food security and urbanisation across the world increases, it is necessary for academics, policymakers and practitioners to afford greater attention to methods of food and energy production with the potential to contribute towards sustaining urban populations (Wiskerke & Viljoen, 2012). Urban Agriculture (UA), “the rearing of livestock and/or produce in the city context” (Hardman & Larkham, 2014, p. 2), could play a part in shaping the future of a sustainable food supply by shortening the gap between production and consumption and utilising resources that might otherwise be considered as waste products (Ackerman, 2012; Orsini, Kahane, Nono-Womdim, & Gianquinto, 2013; Smit & Nasr, 1992). By reducing the distance travelled by food from farm to fork, UA holds the potential to make the process of production more visible to the urban consumer, which may affect the way we perceive and value our food (Caputo, 2012).

UA is commonly practised in countries of the Global South but is experiencing a surge in popularity in North America and Europe (Tornaghi, 2014). Although the UK has a rich history of private and allotment gardening, other forms of urban growing such as community gardening are still relatively novel (Hardman & Larkham, 2014). Interest in urban growing activities is spreading and there are several well-established UA projects in action across the country, including Incredible Edible, which started in 2007 as a small growing project in Todmorden and now has over 100 associated groups in the UK; and London’s Capital Growth, an ambitious project, which initially aimed to establish 2012 new growing spaces by the year 2012, and now has over 2700 in the City (Incredible Edible Network, 2017; Sustain, 2017).

This research focuses on Real Food Wythenshawe (RFW) in South Manchester, which in 2012 was the recipient of the largest fund ever awarded to a project of this type within Greater Manchester (Manchester Confidential, 2012). Wythenshawe, which was designed

as part of the garden city movement in the early twentieth century, suffers from high levels of deprivation and has been referred to as a food desert due to the lack of access that residents have to fresh food (Small World Consulting, 2013). Food access problems along with high levels of unemployment, poor health and a perceived lack of knowledge regarding food preparation have inspired the RFW project. RFW received £1 million from the Big Lottery to pioneer the practice of UA in Wythenshawe and to initiate a level of behavioural change within the community, encouraging residents to redevelop their connection to food and to grow, cook and eat fresh, local food through the use of growing and cooking activities (Real Food Wythenshawe, n.d.).

RFW is required to provide the Big Lottery with evidence through an evaluation of the project and there is a wider need for more research to establish the impact of UA and its place in securing a sustainable food supply. The University of Salford has partnered with RFW to assist with the project evaluation, aspects of which have been carried out by a number of researchers and students within the university. While the PhD research has been partially funded by RFW, the work has remained independent of the project and provides an in-depth analysis of a particular aspect of the initiative rather than offering a full evaluation.

The thesis begins with an overview of RFW, from the initial stages of project design through to its implementation. It situates RFW in the context of the history and development of the district of Wythenshawe, and investigates the motivations driving the UA project from the top-down along with the motivations of participation and experiences at the grassroots. A case study approach is adopted in order to provide a review of the project's impacts on participants at two contrasting growing sites, with the aim of contributing to the growing body of literature describing the wider impact of UA, particularly within a UK context.

The thesis is structured as follows: The aim and objectives of the research are introduced in the following section and a review of relevant literature along with gaps in knowledge is offered in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the research approach, research sites, methods used and the process of data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 then introduces the district of Wythenshawe, describing its development as a social intervention, led by planners and policymakers during the interwar period in order to

improve the quality of life for people residing in crowded inner-city areas. The second half of the chapter briefly assesses the current landscape of deprivation in Wythenshawe and introduces RFW, an intervention led by the local social housing association to improve the lives of Wythenshawe residents through cooking and growing activities in the area. The remainder of Chapter 4 draws on interview data to offer insights into the project's origins and design and explores the motivations driving RFW from the top-down.

Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the impacts and motivations of participation from the perspective of those carrying out the growing activities at two contrasting sites in Wythenshawe. The final results chapter seeks to bring the two perspectives together in order to bridge the gap between the perceptions of those running the project and those experiencing its effects on the ground. It begins with a consideration of some of the assumptions regarding food knowledge in Wythenshawe, upon which the project is based. It then considers how the grassroots focus of the project could have been further strengthened through the development and maintenance of partnership work and a consistency of vision and ideals from the various partners and participants involved. This leads to questions regarding how the project could adopt a more collaborative approach in the area with surrounding groups and organisations and whether the role of project coordinator should be focused predominantly on enabling or implementing project activities. It concludes by discussing volunteering in UA projects and the problems associated with a reliance on voluntary labour, focusing on the experience of the project volunteers in order to consider ways in which their involvement with RFW could be enhanced and made more mutually beneficial. The thesis draws to a close by means of a discussion of the results, followed by a conclusion and recommendations for future UA projects and further work.

1.2. Aim

To adopt an in-depth case study approach to critically analyse the design, implementation and impact of a large-scale formal UA scheme in Wythenshawe, using the research to assist a wider exploration of the need, value and potential of UA in the UK.

1.3. Objectives

1. To establish gaps in knowledge and to highlight areas of interest specifically relating to the practices and impacts of UA and its place within the wider food system.
2. To gain a systematic and comprehensive understanding of the project's activities, its desired achievements and methods of implementation.
3. To engage with key participants and stakeholders in the project and provide a detailed interpretation of its design and the motivations and expectations of those who coordinate its activities.
4. To employ an ethnographically led case study approach to offer a detailed and critical understanding of impact, motivations and perceptions of those participating in UA activities in Wythenshawe, and to investigate perceptions and attitudes of those on the periphery.
5. Critically reflect upon areas of congruence and dissonance between the top-down approach of the organisers and the participants' experiences at the grassroots level, with a view to placing these reflections into the widening body of critical literature surrounding institution-led UA.

Figure 1 on the following page diagrammatically links the objectives to the research methods.

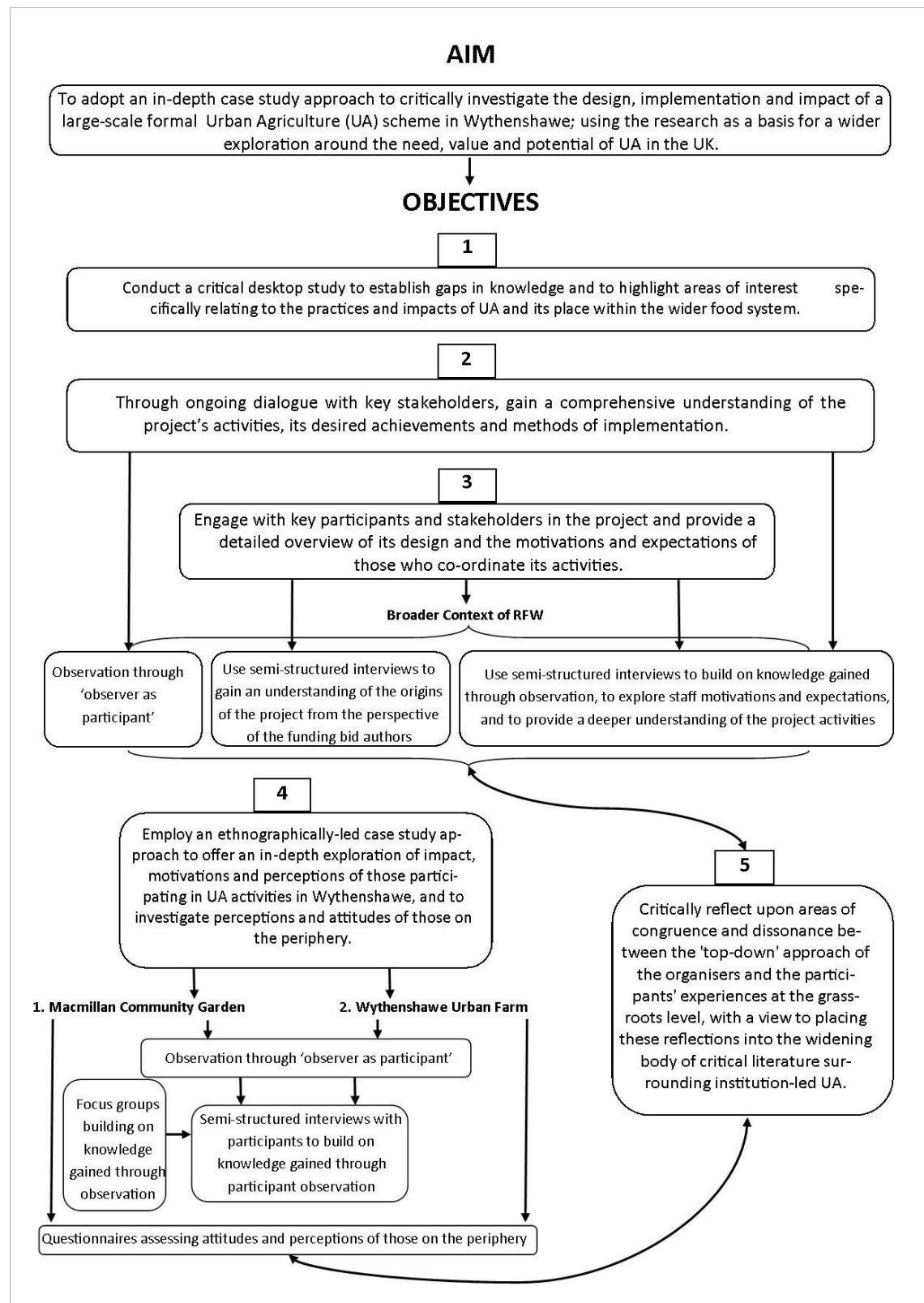


Figure 1. Diagram linking objectives to research techniques

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This review introduces UA, the practice of growing food in the city, with a consideration of its place in the global food security debate followed by a reflection of the practice and its merits. The topic of food security is introduced in section 2.2 followed by the difficulties that may emerge in sustaining food security for a growing urban population. In section 2.3, the concept of “food miles” is introduced and the distance between food production and urban consumers is considered. The review then introduces the concept of UA in more depth in section 2.4, exploring a typology of UA activity and its associated potential impacts. The topic of UA can be considered through a variety of disciplinary perspectives and the review concludes by offering a consideration of UA from both a critical geography and a food justice perspective in section 2.5, before summarising gaps in research and new areas for investigation in section 2.6.

2.2. Food security

This section begins by considering the concept of food security and the ways in which the physical distance between agricultural production and the consumption of food has enabled the development of a perceptual gap, whereby consumers lack an appreciation of the very processes that ensure their continued nourishment. The invisibility of our food system affects the way in which we value food and influences the choices we make as consumers (Caputo, 2012; Pothukuchi & Kaufman, 1999). UA is often discussed in terms of its ability to bridge this gap, both geographically and perceptually, by moving food production back into the view of the urban citizen and encouraging a renewed appreciation of the food we eat while improving urban food security (Altieri et al., 1999; Caputo, 2012; Zezza & Tasciotti, 2010).

Food security is defined as a situation where “all people at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and

food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO, 2006, p. 1). Concerns regarding compromised levels of food security have developed following a culmination of factors, described as the “perfect storm” in 2009 by the UK’s Chief Scientific Advisor (Marsden, 2010, p. 443). The “storm” represents the combination of conflicting drivers of change, including climate change, a predicted shift in diets, reduced resource availability and population growth, all of which may contribute to an increasingly volatile food supply (IPCC, 2014; The Government Office for Science, 2011). A major concern is a rapidly increasing global population, which is currently over 7 billion and is expected to rise to between 8.3 billion and 10.9 billion by 2050 (UN, 2013; UNFPA, 2016). This predicted surge is associated with an anticipated loss in the global capacity to produce sufficient quantities of food to sustain the population for future years (Lang, 2010).

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimates that by 2050, in order to meet the nutritional demands of a growing population, food production must increase by 70% (FAO, 2009). Similarly, the Royal Society’s report *‘Reaping the Benefits’* proposed a necessary increase of at least 50%, globally, and predicted that meat production will need to be doubled by 2050 in order to satisfy demands (Royal Society, 2009). The framing of food security in terms of a mandatory significant increase in food production is however, not universally accepted. For example, Tomlinson (2013, p. 8) asserts that the “new productivism” policy view has emerged as a result of a “wrong statistic”, while several other academic commentators and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) maintain that the global population can be sustained with no substantial increase in levels of production, arguing that problems of social injustice including wealth distribution and wasted food, must first be addressed (see for instance: Friends of the Earth, 2012; Greenpeace, 2010; Holland, 2004; Kemp, Insch, Holdsworth, & Knight, 2010; Oxfam, 2014; Peck & Tickell, 2002). Furthermore, Wiskerke and Viljoen (2012) argue that simply producing more food is not a complete solution and may actively delay progress for a more comprehensive approach.

2.3. Distance from production: Food miles

Since the Green Revolution in the mid-twentieth century, which stimulated the accelerated expansion of agricultural production following large investments in research and

development initiatives, it has been possible for urban populations to experience rapid growth (Lang & Barling, 2012). As of 2007, the number of people living in urban areas has exceeded that of rural areas and it is estimated that by 2050, around 6.5 billion people will live in cities, which equates to 66% of the projected global population (Orsini et al., 2013; UN, 2014; Wiskerke & Viljoen, 2012). The process of urbanisation has coincided with an increasingly centralised food system favouring large industrial farms over small dispersed holdings, effectively removing food production from the urban sphere (Lang & Barling, 2012).

The distance travelled by food from producer to consumer accounts for high levels of fuel consumption during transportation (Pretty, Ball, Lang, & Morison, 2005). The food system's reliance on transportation fuel can be partly attributed to international transit (Food Standards Agency, 2010), however, transporting food within the UK is also costly and accounts for 25% of the country's HGV emissions (Hardman & Larkham, 2014; Lang, 2010; Pretty et al., 2005). The distance that food travels from field to fork was termed “food miles” by Professor Tim Lang, and has been cited as grounds for shortening the food supply chain and supporting local food (Pretty et al., 2005).

The concept of food miles is appealing in its simplicity, with the Food Ethics Council (2007) acknowledging its potential use by companies to frame environmental concerns with their customers, however Kemp et al. (2010) cast doubt over consumers' commitment to shortening food miles, observing that only a small minority from their sample of UK supermarket shoppers appeared to make food choices based on the distance travelled. Moreover, when considering the perceived benefits of a shortened supply chain, Born and Purcell (2006, p. 195) argue that caution should be exercised, warning of the tendency for local food advocates to fall into the “local trap” assuming an inherent superiority of food produced at a local scale. This concept is particularly relevant when considering the environmental costs of developing systems to grow particular crops in unsuitable climates, which, in some cases, may be more environmentally damaging than transportation from native countries (Born & Purcell, 2006). In 2005, DEFRA commissioned a report entitled “The validity of food miles as an indicator of sustainable development”, which concluded that simply measuring the distance travelled does not provide an “adequate indicator of

sustainability” (Watkiss, Schmith, Tweddle, & McKinnon, 2005, p. ii), and more recently, Coley, Howard, and Winter (2011) have called for a rethink of the concept, arguing that the distance travelled by the food is not the only significant factor when considering the environmental impact of a particular food, leading them to develop processes that take into account factors such as the mass of the food and the fuel efficiency of the mode of transport used.

While the environmental impact of the distance travelled by food to reach the consumer can be considered in a number of ways as highlighted above, the resulting psychological barrier that separates the consumer from food production can, in part, be attributed to the post-industrial centralisation of our food system (Steel, 2012; Tornaghi, 2014). It is this “industrial logic” that has been blamed for much of society's inability to conceive of a food system that is less centralised and more dispersed (Caputo, 2012, p. 262). Gorgolewski, Komisar, and Nasr (2011) argue that the distance between urban dwellers and the source of their food is associated with some of the world's most immediate dilemmas, such as climate change, food poverty, obesity and the reliability of our energy supply.

Shortening the gap between production and consumption is already occurring in many cities as people reconnect with food, often by growing their own fruit and vegetables (Howe, Bohn, & Viljoen, 2005). These urban growing areas include allotments, hospital and school gardens, community gardens and inner-city farms, all of which are examples of UA (van der Schans & Wiskerke, 2012). It is thought that UA, which is introduced and discussed in further detail in section 2.4, has the ability to make positive reinforcements for urban dwellers while allowing a more complete appreciation of the societal and ecological repercussions of the food that they consume (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011; Caputo, 2012).

2.4. Urban Agriculture: An introduction

Broadly speaking, the term UA describes “food cultivation and animal husbandry on urban and peri-urban land” (Tornaghi, 2014, p. 551). UA differs from city to city depending on the specific demands and resources of that area, making the task of tracing one unifying definition naturally problematic:

"In attempting to define the term Urban Agriculture we immediately encounter one of the main problems of the subject for research. In view of the wide range of activities and subjects it covers, a definition that can be regarded as universally acceptable can be hard to find."

(Bryant, 2012, p. 5)

With reference to key authors in the field, this review considers UA in terms of an activity that involves growing, processing and distributing crops within urban and peri-urban areas. This includes the production of fruit and vegetables, but can also involve raising livestock for meat and dairy production (Caputo, 2012; Mougeot, 2000; Orsini et al., 2013; van der Schans & Wiskerke, 2012). Types of UA range from the small scale, such as allotments, rooftop gardens, windowsills, beehives, community gardens or growing spaces in an around housing estates, to the larger scale of orchards, urban farms and land sharing schemes (Ackerman, 2012; Battersby & Marshak, 2013; Bryant, 2012; Tornaghi, 2014).

A well-cited example of the application of UA lies in Cuba, where it has been practised for over 20 years (Hardman & Larkham, 2014; Viljoen & Howe, 2005). UA was employed on a large scale following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the introduction of US trade embargos, which consequently deprived Cuba of vital resources, threatening the island's food security (Altieri et al., 1999). The Cuban Government developed national policies to support UA as a method of food production and the capital city of Havana devoted more than 35,000 hectares of land to UA, illustrating its potential for alleviating hunger on a large scale (Orsini et al., 2013). Recent changes in political relations and the relaxation of some restrictions may lead to the US trade embargo being lifted, but it is still unclear what, if any impact this would have on Cuba's agricultural practices. Altieri (2016) warns that in opening up trade relations with the US, Cuba may risk becoming victim to the monopolies of large US agribusinesses, threatening crop diversity and the livelihoods of small farmers, and once again putting the country's food security at risk.

In Detroit, USA, lies another exemplar of the adoption of UA, where the collapse of the motor industry and with it, the loss of employment within the city led to a dramatic drop in population and a rise in the quantity of vacant land (Ackerman, 2012; Nordahl, 2009;

Pothukuchi, 2015). The city quickly became an urban food desert, where the remaining residents struggled to access fresh food and began to develop productive urban gardens through necessity (Hardman & Larkham, 2014). Detroit is now thought of a leader in UA with approximately 1400 urban farms and gardens operating within the City (Colasanti, Hamm, & Litjens, 2012; Leigh Hester, 2016).

While UA is an international phenomenon, UA activities should not be considered as globally homogeneous. This is due to the multitude of factors affecting production and consumption in urban areas across the globe such as rates of population growth, consumption patterns, cultural habits, proportions of wealth spent on food and susceptibility to fluctuations in food prices, which vary from region to region (Orsini et al., 2013; Tornaghi, 2014). Battersby and Marshak (2013) observe that academics conceptualise UA in the Global South separately from UA in the North, with the former being led by development studies and the latter attracting interest from critical urban studies and food justice scholars. Historically, the majority of UA literature has focused on cities of the Global South (See for example: Mensah, Amoah, Drechsel, & Abaidoo, 2001; Mougeot, 2005; Zezza & Tasciotti, 2010), however within the past 20 years, UA has also emerged as a popular practice in North America (Tornaghi, 2014).

While private and allotment gardening in towns and cities has a long tradition in the UK, the commercial cultivation of crops in urban areas, as opposed to growing for leisure or personal subsistence, is still a relatively novel concept (Hardman & Larkham, 2014). The practice of food growing in UK cities has intensified recently, illustrated by Church, Mitchell, Ravenscroft, and Stapleton (2015), who used data from the European Quality of Life Survey to assess the prevalence of food growing in European countries. It showed a rise in food-growing activities across Europe and increased demands for allotments and community gardens in the UK, with the number of community gardens registered by the Federation of Urban Farms and Community Gardens increasing from 2010 to 2011 by 65% (Church et al., 2015).

Although urban populations are experiencing a period of expansion, the subject of food production is largely confined to the domain of rural studies (Orsini et al., 2013; Wiskerke & Viljoen, 2012). As such, the potential benefits and community impacts of UA are not

currently well known among academics, planners and decision makers in the UK (Caputo, 2012). While food production is a defining feature of many UA projects, it is not always viewed as the primary objective and there are numerous possible benefits and motivations for producing food in urban spaces (Ackerman, 2012). Jac Smit, commonly referred to as the “Father of Urban Agriculture” (Nasr, 2009., para. 1) argued that by closing the “open loops” of food systems in cities, UA could reduce resource use and help to introduce a more balanced economy (Smit & Nasr, 1992, p. 141). UA may also be used to alleviate hunger and poverty in urban areas by supplying low income residents with locally produced food (Caputo, 2012; Smit & Nasr, 1992), and by providing opportunities to learn new skills, which may later be used in seeking employment (Sustain, 2014). Furthermore, increased access to green space has been associated with higher levels of exercise, stress reduction and enhanced community cohesion (Howe, Viljoen, & Bohn, 2005; Small World Consulting, 2013; Sustain, 2014).

Until recently, the narrative of UA has portrayed the practice in a largely positive light with many accounts written from an advocacy perspective, and scarce research highlighting the limitations or adverse effects of UA (Battersby & Marshak, 2013; Orsini et al., 2013; Tornaghi, 2014). Those concerns that do exist, relate to the potential yields of agricultural activities that are constricted by the confines of urban space (Cooper, 2013; Martellozzo et al., 2014), possible contamination risks, safety hazards, the inappropriate use of pesticides and fertilisers, and health hazards associated with close proximity to livestock (Mougeot, 2000; Orsini et al., 2013). Urban soils in particular are vulnerable to contamination from a number of sources including traffic emissions, storm runoff and lead-based pollutants, such as paint (Chipungu, Magidimisha, Hardman, & Beesley, 2015). While the possibility of soil contamination should be an immediate consideration for newly established UA sites Kaiser, Williams, Basta, Hand, and Huber (2015) note that the cultivation of vegetables on urban sites offers the potential to diminish soil contamination over a longer period.

In addition to those potential hazards that relate to physical risks stemming directly from the cultivation of urban areas, more recent concerns regarding the UA movement have been raised by critical geographers and food justice scholars. This has resulted from a tendency for UA literature to reflect an enthusiastic advocacy approach that lacks the

critical lens necessary to expose potential injustices that are developed or entrenched through its practices. These issues are raised and discussed in the following section.

2.5. Critical geographies of Urban Agriculture and approaches to food justice

As the prevalence of both grassroots and formal UA initiatives increases across the UK, critical scholars (see for example Tornaghi (2014)) call for greater consideration of the more contentious areas of UA. Rosol (2012, p. 240) comments that UA activities such as community gardens have the capacity to both critique and provide alternatives to “traditional state-provided open spaces”, while others emphasise UA’s potential to entrench neoliberalism or exacerbate forms of social injustice and exclusion by softening the blow of financial crises and by inadvertently supporting the retraction of state welfare provision (Pudup, 2008). While acknowledging the tendency for UA projects to support the “rolling back of the social safety net” as non-profit organisations fill the void created by austerity measures, McClintock (2014, p. 1) argues that UA is both radical *and* neoliberal. It is radical in its enduring association with grassroots movements seeking to oppose the dominant food system, but neoliberal, in the sense that projects must function within the neoliberal structures of society and in doing so, must reproduce and further entrench certain aspects of that framework. He argues that by refusing to acknowledge and accept the contradictions inherent in UA, we may fail to utilise its transformative power. While the North American context suggests that UA projects have been stimulated by a decline in industry leading to emerging food deserts and by a retraction of welfare provision (see for example the case of Detroit), this narrative has been questioned in the UK. Milbourne (2012, p. 955) instead claims that there is a lack of evidence to support the idea that UA projects have developed in response to a shrinking state and in fact, the decline of local state services gives residents the opportunity to “wrestle back control of local space” and to engage in the development of a more democratic community, forming new spaces of social justice.

More recently, Crossan, Cumbers, McMaster, and Shaw (2016, p. 5) have applied the term “Do It Yourself (DIY) Citizenship” to the actions of community gardeners in a Glasgow-based study, where they describe the term as:

“A form of citizenship that is generative of collaborative social relations and new urban places, while also being disruptive, in unsettling neoliberalism’s penchant for atomized individuals and reversing its frequently wasteful spatial practices.”

This description of urban growing avoids labelling the activity as necessarily radical or as a mechanism by which participants unwittingly entrench neoliberal structures and give a tacit approval of a shrinking state. Moreover, DIY citizenship perhaps provides a window through which scholars can begin to view UA activities in a manner that theoretically disentangles the practice from the contradictions laid out by McClintock (2014). In a similar vein, Kneafsey, Owen, Bos, Broughton, and Lennartsson (2017) have adopted the concept of “quiet sustainability”, described as:

“Practices that result in beneficial environmental or social outcomes, that do not relate directly or indirectly to market transactions, and that are not represented by the practitioners as relating directly to environmental or sustainability goals. Cultures of sharing, repairing, gifting and bartering characterise quiet sustainability. Everyday practices that have low environmental impacts, but that have not been pursued for that reason, are also features of that concept.”

(Smith & Jehlička, 2013, p. 155)

The concept of quiet sustainability creates space to reflect on the motivations of urban gardeners in a way that does not need to be perceived as intentionally radical or subversive, similar to that of DIY citizenship. Quiet sustainability describes participants and volunteers whose actions are free from a specific agenda to politically reconfigure the food system from the ground-up. Acts of quiet sustainability contribute towards forming new relationships within society and altering perceptions of food and community that allow movement towards food justice. Kneafsey et al. (2017) compare the concept of quiet sustainability with “quiet food sovereignty”, and its focus on “individual economic benefits and ecological production for personal health, as well as culturally appropriate forms of sociality, generated by the exchange of self-produced food” (Visser, Mamonova, Spoor, &

Nikulin, 2015, p. 525). Indeed, Kneafsey et al. (2017) provide support for these concepts through their research on community food production in the UK, which observed that participants tended not to politicise their own activities or to perceive them as critical of the wider food system.

In response to Chiara Tornaghi's call for a critical consideration of particular forms of "land regulation and ownership which determine the set of constraints and opportunities [shaping UA initiatives]" (Tornaghi, 2014, p. 11), Demailly and Darly (2017) consider the rise of temporary gardening as a means of adapting to the precarious nature of urban land access. Temporary or "meanwhile" sites act as spaces where forms of UA such as community gardening can take place while areas of land lay idle in preparation for development. The use of vacant plots for food production is not a recent phenomenon and many people in the UK and across Europe in the early twentieth century used interstitial spaces to grow food during war-induced food shortages (Demailly & Darly, 2017; Gorgolewski et al., 2011). Today, vacant lots can be seen as a result of the capitalist regeneration of urban spaces and processes of development, destruction and recreation in the name of investment and growth (O'Callaghan & Lawton, 2016). Vacant spaces result from a combination of factors, including the decline of industry following periods of recession resulting in deserted brownfield sites; developers and investors deliberately leaving property empty while land values increase; and the production of profit for private property developers through the process of replacing obsolete ageing buildings with newer developments (Demailly & Darly, 2017).

In a recent review, Napawan (2016) observed contrasting priorities and varying intended outcomes of UA projects in San Francisco, between the citywide and the community level. The author suggests that in order to effectively meet the needs of both the local community and the city, more focused goals are required and land allocation methods should be reviewed. Napawan (2016) argues that UA has the potential to effect real change within communities but that its successful implementation has been compromised by our collective failure to provide clarity regarding the specific benefits that are associated with contrasting spaces and different forms of UA. The dynamic nature of urban areas provides opportunity for socially produced spaces, creativity and learning but the concept requires

more research to better understand if engagement with these spaces through UA has the potential to decrease social injustices and increase community cohesion.

While academic attention has been paid to health, horticulture and allotments, literature on community food initiatives has so far largely failed to critically engage with the question of their ability to tackle food injustices in England. Bell and Cerulli (2012) question the ability of UA to contribute to social justice and sustainability and are critical of the practice's overall potential impact on urban food systems, while Kneafsey et al. (2017, p. 2) call for community food production to be situated in a "social, environmental or food justice framework". They claim that due to the difficulties in obtaining funding, charities avoid "the politicised language of "food justice"" in the knowledge that they operate within environments where like-minded organisations are forced to compete for survival (Kneafsey et al., 2017, p. 11). The consideration of UA through a critical geography and a food justice lens highlights a number of areas for new research, which are drawn upon in the following section.

2.6. Gaps in knowledge

This review has initially introduced the practice of UA within the wider context of food security and urbanisation, and has concluded by situating UA within recent debates in critical geography and illustrating its relevance to the concept of food justice. There are several lines of enquiry exposed through the above literature: Firstly, a critical exploration of the motivations and impact of institution-led UA projects; Secondly, a consideration of the motivations of UA project participants in a UK context; Thirdly, an investigation into the development and impact of temporary growing sites; and finally, a need to identify and contrast the motivations and needs of actors across all levels of society involved in or affected by UA practices.

The relevance of UA to the food justice movement and its potential to encourage the reorganisation of urban life from the grassroots by providing "radical alternatives to the capitalist neoliberal organisation of urban life" (Tornaghi, 2014, p. 2) raises interesting questions regarding the motivations driving institution-led UA projects. To respond to Tornaghi's (2014) call for a critical geography of UA would require research that is both

geographical and critical in its approach and that asks how successfully formal UA initiatives achieve their aims, questioning the potential of UA to simply act as a "green wash" or to stimulate gentrification (Tornaghi, 2014, p. 3). It would also investigate the connection between funded UA initiatives and austerity-induced local authority budget cuts.

The consideration of UA activities as radical and subversive, or conversely, as a neoliberal prop has become a popular narrative in recent years among critical geographers (McClintock, 2014; Pudup, 2008). While there is evidence to suggest that this analysis has value, particularly in the North American context, there is some doubt over whether UA participants in the UK view their activities as challenging the politics of our food system or whether their actions are in response to neoliberal policies such as the retraction of state service provision (Kneafsey et al., 2017; Milbourne, 2012). This geographical contrast requires further consideration of the motivations of UA participants and the use of alternative lenses through which to view their actions such as DIY citizenship (Crossan et al., 2016), quiet sustainability (Smith & Jehlička, 2013) and quiet food sovereignty (Visser et al., 2015). These lenses may shed new light on the driving forces behind UA participation in a UK context.

The rise in use of temporary areas of land or "meanwhile" sites for urban growing raises questions regarding the ability of such spaces to increase access to food, to build community cohesion and promote social justice. More research is required to investigate whether these spaces should be accepted as a solution to the precarious nature of urban land access and whether they provide an opportunity for an enhanced quality of life within dynamic cities by allowing an expression of societal change through less permanent or rooted activities (Demailly & Darly, 2017) .

Napawan (2016) gives a clear indication that in order to stimulate effective UA initiatives, the needs and motivations of actors across all levels of society (i.e. local authority, community groups, individuals) must be identified and connections must be made if formal projects, particularly those funded or conducted at a local authority level from the top-down, are to realise their full potential. In addition to the authors mentioned above, Colasanti et al. (2012) note that there have been individual studies of community gardens (see for example Tompkins, 2014), but little research considers the public perceptions of

UA, and in particular, the perceptions of those residents who are not directly involved (Colasanti et al., 2012). This should be addressed by further research that investigates how those on the periphery of UA activities view the practice.

An in-depth study of the RFW project, which is described in more detail in section 3.3.1, 3.5.2 and 4.3, provides an opportunity to explore a number of gaps in research that relate to the different types of impacts produced from various forms of UA activities, the motivations driving funded UA initiatives, how these motivations connect and compare with priorities and impacts at a community level, and how citizens on the periphery of the action perceive UA, while highlighting common goals and exposing areas where divisions in opinions lie.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1. Introduction

In seeking to explore the impacts of UA and the motivations driving both the implementation of projects and the participation in the associated growing activities, this investigation employs techniques that are predominantly rooted in the social sciences. The overarching research methodology takes a case study approach based on participant observation (described in more detail in section 3.4.1.) and uses techniques grounded in ethnography, adopting a constructivist grounded theory approach to analysis. This chapter offers a philosophical reflection of the approach taken, introduces the research sites, the methods of data collection, the process of analysis and the ethical considerations of the research. It then concludes with a discussion of the positionality and reflexivity of the researcher.

3.2. Philosophical and theoretical reflections

All research is grounded in a set of philosophical assumptions relating to the worldview of the researcher and the ways in which they seek to observe, interpret and explain phenomena. As Hill (1981, p. 38) reflects:

“No research (geographic or otherwise) takes place in a philosophical vacuum. Even if it is not explicitly articulated all research is guided by a set of philosophical beliefs. These beliefs influence or motivate the selection of topics for research, the selection of methods for research, and the manner in which completed projects are subjected to evaluation.”

The acceptance that philosophical assumptions affect the way in which research is approached and undertaken begins with the acknowledgement that all observation is “theory laden” (Hanson, 1965, p. 19). This term was used by the philosopher of science Norwood Russell Hanson to describe the idea that observations are formed into perceptions of phenomena based on a conceptual framework that is unique to the

observer, or simply put, “observation of x is shaped by prior knowledge of x ” (Hanson, 1965, p. 19). This framework of assumptions can be collected and shaped over a lifetime through a multitude of different experiences including education, social interactions, critical discussions and exposure to different cultures and geographical areas (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

This research is influenced by a grounded theory approach, which originates from Glaser and Strauss’ original text *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* and was developed during what Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe as the “Golden Age” of qualitative research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). During this time, there was an emphasis on realism, objectivity, and the detachment of the researcher, however the theory has been through many developments and alterations since that era (Birks & Mills, 2015). The analytical process followed in this research is more closely aligned to the description of constructivist grounded theory adopted by Charmaz (2006), which was developed partially in response to a move away from the post-positivism of the 1950s and 60s (Birks & Mills, 2015). The process of data analysis is described in further detail in section 3.6.

The constructivist approach is critical of the more positivistic tradition that assumes that data and knowledge is “...’out there’ waiting to be collected and processed” (Hubbard, Bartley, Fuller, & Kitchin, 2002, p. 8). Instead it rejects the idea that it is necessary or desirable for knowledge construction to be objective, considering understanding to be co-constructed by actors situated within particular contexts and taking an inductive approach to theory formation (Hubbard et al., 2002). Social constructivism enables broad questions to be explored and allows the researcher to understand the world in a way that embraces complexity and avoids categorising or simplifying meanings. It also lends itself to a historically and culturally sensitive approach that necessarily takes into account the positionality of the researcher, which is discussed further in section 3.8 (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

3.3. Research approach and sites of focus

This study employed qualitative research techniques including observations, semi-structured interviews, informal interviews and focus groups to provide an in-depth

investigation of the impacts, motivations and perceptions surrounding UA activities in Wythenshawe. The exploratory nature of the research necessitated the use of qualitative methods, as the required depth of information could not be adequately achieved through the use of quantitative techniques (Silverman, 2010). Indeed, numerous recent studies have highlighted the suitability of qualitative and participatory techniques such as observation and interview for investigating UA projects and groups (see for example Colasanti et al., 2012; Crossan et al., 2016; Hardman & Larkham, 2014; Kneafsey et al., 2017; Sherriff, 2009; Tompkins, 2014). This approach allowed for the generation of detailed descriptions of the lived experiences of participants, as Krueger (1994) notes:

"For several decades the pendulum of evaluation research swung to the quantitative side with primary attention to experimental designs, control groups, and randomization. This sojourn with numbers has been beneficial in that we have gained in our experimental sophistication, but it also nurtured a desire for more understanding of the human experience. Too often quantitative approaches were based on assumptions about people, about things, or about reality in general that were not warranted."

(Krueger, 1994, p. 8)

To gain a depth of understanding of the human experiences of UA, this research adopted a case study approach with two research sites acting as the primary focus of the study. Robson (2011, p. 136) describes case studies as strategies "for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence." Case studies are ideally suited to exploratory qualitative research as data is collected from a number of contrasting sources, allowing for the phenomenon under investigation to be seen through a variety of lenses and for processes and behaviours to be explored in a holistic way (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Meyer, 2001). The three points of focus were: The design and implementation of a top-down UA project, RFW; the perceptions of participants and surrounding residents of a community gardening project; and the perceptions of volunteers, visitors, and staff at an urban farm. These three aspects, which are represented in Figure 2, formed the foundation of the research:

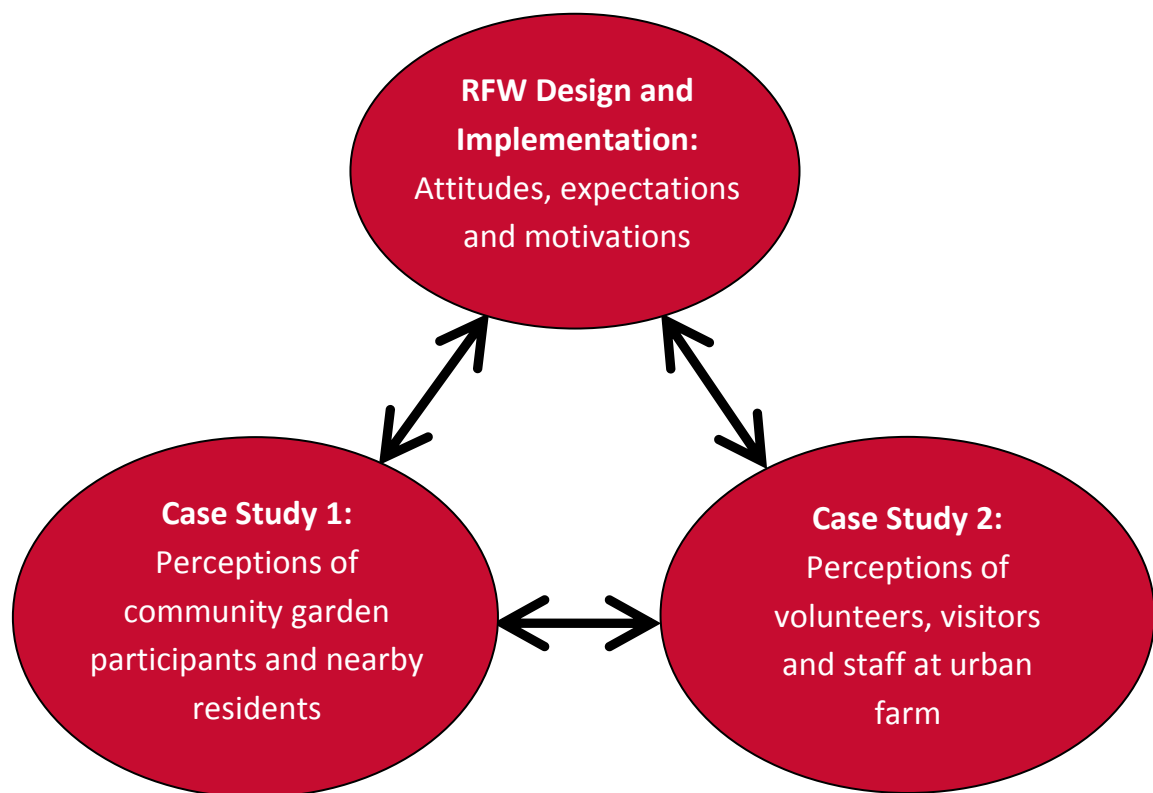


Figure 2. An overview of the research approach

The broad overview of RFW (see 3.3.1) enabled a greater understanding of the project's aims, activities and methods of implementation, providing an opportunity to explore staff perceptions and their ambitions for the project. It also offered context for the two case studies to be viewed in relation to the functioning of the wider project and enabled access to gatekeepers, study sites and participants. The Macmillan community garden and the urban farm occupied opposite ends of the UA spectrum in terms of size, accessibility and function. This allowed for comparisons to be made between two contrasting sites in terms of impact, use of space, motivations and also the perceptions of members of the public who were on the periphery of the activities (see Tornaghi, 2014 for a range of types of UA sites). The following sections describe the three points of focus in further detail.

3.3.1. Real Food Wythenshawe design and implementation: Investigating attitudes, expectations and motivations

Initially the focus of the research involved exploring the impacts of the growing activities on the participants of the project and was not necessarily concerned with the structure and functioning of the project itself. It soon became clear that the two areas were inextricably linked and that to understand the perceptions of those who have been involved with RFW and its associated impacts, it would be crucial to illustrate and critique the foundations upon which the project was built. This would include an exploration of the motivations, expertise and ideals driving its implementation. Through regular dialogue with the RFW team and involvement in project activities, rapport was built and a greater understanding of the project and its goals was developed.

RFW, which is explored in further detail in Chapter 4, aims to teach Wythenshawe residents to grow their own food and to cook from scratch, while seeking to encourage the consumption of local, healthy food. In the initial stages of research, site visits were made, meetings were attended and assistance at events was provided. This had the dual benefit of familiarising the researcher with the project team and giving something back in terms of volunteering hours. As Kawulich (2005, p. 39) notes, it is important while carrying out participant observation to give something in return for participants “sharing their lives... [and] sharing information with the researcher”. Depending on the approach and ethical considerations of the research, this can be in the form of financial reward, gifts, labour, time or publications (Kawulich, 2005). Spending time building rapport with the RFW staff members also enabled contact to be made with growing groups connected with the project to be considered as potential case studies for the research. Following a number of site visits, two sites were chosen as the primary research focus. The first was the Macmillan community garden (see 3.3.2) and the second was Wythenshawe Farm (see 3.3.3). The two sites are introduced in the following two sections.

3.3.2. Macmillan community garden

The Macmillan community garden (see Figure 3) was located on the first area of land that RFW secured for use as a meanwhile (temporary) community growing site. Glover, Parry, and Shinew (2005, p. 454) describe community gardens as:

“Plots of urban land on which community members can grow flowers or foodstuffs for personal or collective benefit. Community gardeners share certain resources, such as space, tools, and water. Though often facilitated by social service agencies, non-profit organizations, park and recreation departments, housing authorities, apartment complexes, block associations, or grassroots associations, community gardens nevertheless tend to remain under the control of the gardeners themselves.”



Figure 3. The Macmillan community garden, Wythenshawe

The growing project was set up in partnership with the charity Macmillan Cancer Support for patients who have been affected by cancer. Between late 2013 and summer 2016 the group met every week under the coordination of a Macmillan volunteer, who was established as a gatekeeper through site visits in late 2014. The RFW staff members were available for continued support, but the group managed the site with minimal assistance

from the project team. Although the sessions ran on a weekly basis, there was no obligation for participants to attend with any regularity and no pressure to perform any strenuous tasks. A proportion of the produce grown on the site was shared among the group and the remainder was taken to the local hospital in exchange for donations. The organisers and members of the group felt that it was important for the produce to be grown using organic methods and were keen to ensure that no food was wasted.

From a research perspective, the site was of interest as an example of a relatively new form of UA, where the participants' main concerns did not appear to relate solely to food production, instead focusing predominantly on the social and health aspects of UA (St. Clair, Hardman, Armitage, & Sherriff, 2017). As discussed in the literature review, temporary growing sites are increasing in popularity and there is a growing need to investigate the impact and potential of these spaces. The growing site was also in direct contrast to the urban farm (see 3.3.3) both in its small scale and in that it was intended for a specific group of dedicated participants rather than being open to the general public. Furthermore, the community garden provides an interesting example of where a top-down organisation can support a growing group that is essentially maintained from the ground-up, by providing land and resources while allowing the group members to determine the use of space and the destination of the produce. This autonomy contrasts with the organisation of the growing at the urban farm, where use of space was more restricted by management structures within the park and by the intended outcomes of RFW such as growing for shows or for selling in the farm shop. The next section describes the second case study, Wythenshawe Farm in further detail.

3.3.3. Wythenshawe Farm

The urban farm is situated in Wythenshawe Park, an area of open parkland covering 109 hectares (see Figure 4). The European Federation of City Farms defines urban farms as:

“Agricultural projects, where visitors of all ages and backgrounds can get in touch with animals, nature, their environment and each other. City farms offer training and information, a social and cultural meeting point, recreation,

therapy or fulfilling day care activities... City farms are green spaces in the middle of a busy, fast and urbanised world.”

(European Federation of City Farms, n.d., para. 1)



Figure 4. Wythenshawe Park

Wythenshawe Farm is a large site and contains a farm shop, a walled garden and livestock. Unlike the Macmillan community garden, the farm is open to the public during park opening hours and is free to access. A number of growing groups meet at the park independently of the RFW project and have done so since before the project began. In addition to this, RFW organises a weekly growing session at various sites within the park including the walled garden, the park’s horticultural centre and a polytunnel near the entrance to the farm. The growing sessions have been attended by a diverse group of people, both from within Wythenshawe and from surrounding areas. Potentially due to the sessions being organised during a weekday, the group members were generally unemployed or retired. Produce grown at the farm by the RFW group has been used in a number of ways including being displayed at horticultural shows, or being used in cookery demonstrations. Due to the sporadic nature of attendance by volunteers, the supply of vegetables was not regular enough to be relied upon for supplying the farm shop; however

produce was occasionally sold in the shop when available. Since the RFW project began, the staff have assisted with the redecoration of the farm shop and have helped to identify local suppliers for certain products. The project has also provided funding for one part-time member of staff for the shop.

The site is of interest from a research perspective as there has been a lack of critical engagement specifically with urban farms and although there is an emerging body of literature on the activities of community gardeners, there is a need for comparative studies within the broader field of UA in order to begin to compare impacts and potentials of different types of activities and sites. As the site is based within a large area of land and has an associated commercial outlet, the farm may also have more scope to upscale operations than smaller UA sites such as community gardens, which may lack the capacity to expand. The open nature of the farm also allows the opportunity to engage with visitors to the site who are not directly involved in the project's activities in order to gauge their perceptions of the UA, and unlike the Macmillan community garden, the growing group is open to all rather than being directed at a particular group of individuals. While the Macmillan community garden members use collective decision making and work together as a group, the growing group operates under the direction of a RFW coordinator. This aspect of the group is interesting as the structure of the sessions may affect the way in which the participants view the activities and feel motivated to attend. The following section discusses in more depth the research methods that were used to explore the three areas of focus of the study introduced in this section (as illustrated in Figure 2).

3.4. Research methods

The background, aims and implementation of the RFW project have been explored through observations, an initial focus group and semi-structured interviews. Research at the two case study sites, the Macmillan community garden and Wythenshawe Farm, utilised a combination of participant observation, individual interviews, focus groups and short questionnaires. A diagram showing research methods for each area of research is presented in Figure 5:

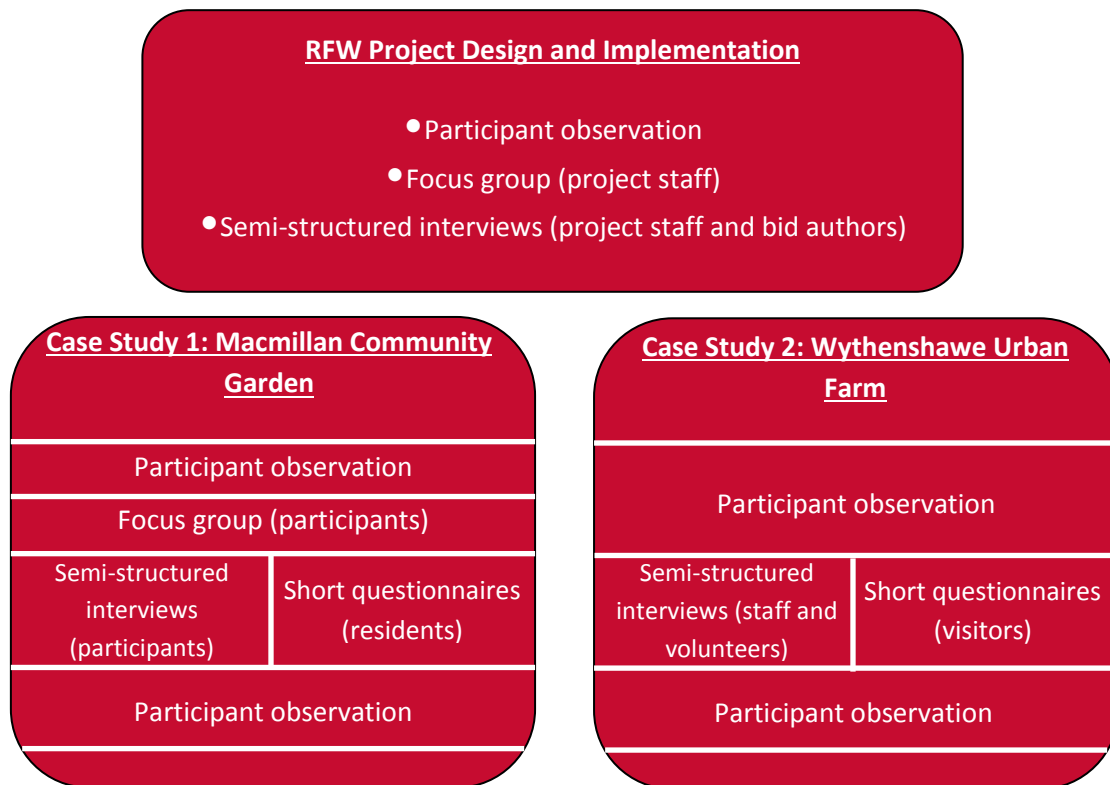


Figure 5. An overview of the research methods used in the study

3.4.1. Participant observation

The chosen methodology has been broadly influenced by ethnography, which has traditionally been used by anthropologists to study cultures, and arguably started life as a way for European colonisers to develop descriptions of “other” cultural scenes (Spradley, 1979; Taylor, 2001). While observation is a central pillar of an ethnographic study, the combined emphasis of careful observation and a focus on learning from the observed allows for the development of a particular richness of description. As Malinowski, a pioneer of the technique, notes, ethnography seeks “to grasp the native’s point of view, his relation to life, to realise his vision of his world” (Malinowski, 1922, p. 25). This type of technique is ideally suited to exploring experiences of UA as it allows for detailed accounts to be built, while not seeking to generalise or extrapolate the experiences of individuals to the wider populace (Taylor, 2001). The intention is not to present a wholly ethnographic account.

Instead, ethnographic techniques have been utilised, in order to provide a rich description of UA in Wythenshawe and the perceptions of those involved.

Participant observation has been used throughout the duration of the fieldwork in order to integrate with and observe participants in all three areas of focus; this includes the overview of RFW and the two case studies introduced in section 3.3. According to Gold (1958), there are several potential roles the researcher can adopt as an observer. Although this account was composed several decades ago, the principles remain relevant and the same terms can be found in recent publications (see for example Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). These include:

- Complete participant: the researcher infiltrates a research setting where they are completely involved in participation and the research subjects are not aware of the researcher's role.
- Participant as observer: the researcher is involved in the group and combines formal and informal methods of observation. This role places more focus on participation than observation.
- Observer as participant: the researcher participates in activities but their main objective is observation and the role is clear to group.
- Complete observer: the researcher is hidden from the view of the group.

(adapted from Gold, 1958)

For the study, the role of observer as participant was adopted for all three areas of focus, as it was not necessary to conceal the role of researcher from the group members, which allowed for sufficient involvement in order to gain a comprehensive appreciation of the groups and their activities. The observer as participant role also gave context to help inform interview questions and was used to inform topics for focus group discussions and interviews (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). Participant observation allows for "prolonged immersion" in the research setting, which better equips the researcher to appreciate the situation from the perspective of the participants and provides context for further research, while enabling the researcher to become familiar with the dynamics and culture of the group being studied (Bryman, 2008, p. 465). This type of integration may allow the

participants to feel able to talk freely during interviews and behave in a way that is less reactive, demonstrating a lower level of concern regarding the researcher's presence (Bernard, 2006).

Spradley (1980, p. 78) identifies three significant aspects of social situations as “place, actor, and activities”, which can act as a guide when observing social phenomena. While accepting the assertion that the “researcher’s tacit knowledge and expectations often play a major role in determining which observations are worthy of annotation” (Wolfinger, 2002, p. 85), the three factors highlighted by Spradley provide a helpful starting point for the focus of field notes. Accordingly, field notes were composed detailing information regarding the location of the fieldwork, who was present, the dates of the activities, the types of activities carried out and conversations that were held. During observations, photographs of the sites were taken and additional forms of data were collected from group members such as leaflets and digital presentations. Information was also provided via emails as a result of informal discussions with participants. Observations extended to informal interviews with residents surrounding one of the sites and meetings with related parties. For example, following an informal discussion with the gatekeeper at the Macmillan community garden, a meeting was arranged with a staff member at the Macmillan Centre in Wythenshawe Hospital where information regarding the charity's activities and involvement with the site was gathered.

Methodological triangulation can be achieved when two contrasting methods of data collection are employed in one study. This can involve the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods or the use of different techniques within one methodological approach, such as two contrasting qualitative research techniques (Thurmond, 2001). Participant observation has been used here in conjunction with semi-structured interviews (see section 3.4.2. below), for the reduction of research bias and in an attempt to assist the process of interpretation through the use of multiple perspectives (Zohrabi, 2013). Adopting an ethnographically-influenced approach, has provided a deeper understanding of the research subjects and may add credibility to the resulting interpretations of interview data (Bernard, 2006).

3.4.2. Semi-structured interviews

The qualitative interview is a commonly used tool in social research (Silverman, 2010) and ranges from being completely structured, where questions are prepared and scripted, to being unstructured, where questions can be improvised leading to a more open discussion (Myers & Newman, 2007). Semi-structured interviews lie halfway between the two, where questions or topics are planned in advance but there is flexibility in the discussion and room for improvisation and digression (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Longhurst, 2003). The use of semi-structured interviews allows for areas of specific focus to develop following the continual process of observation, reflection and review of field notes and for resulting themes to be investigated further, narrowing the scope of the research, and introducing a greater depth of understanding (Bryman, 2008).

Semi-structured interviews were held with staff at Wythenshawe Community Housing Group (WCHG), two authors of the RFW funding bid document, staff and volunteers at the urban farm and individuals of the Macmillan group, building upon observations and themes raised in the initial focus group. While the structure of the interviews remained relatively open to allow for the conversations to be taken in different directions and for new topics to emerge, interviews had core themes, which differed slightly depending on the interview context, site and interviewee. Interview topics were developed following a consideration of the research objectives, the initial analysis of focus group transcripts; and through repeated readings of observational field notes. This allowed for interviews to address the core concerns of the research, while being tailored to the individual. For example, while interview topics for participants at the Macmillan community garden varied depending on the interests of that individual, core themes included the participants' motivations for attendance and the perceived impacts of their attendance.

3.4.3. Focus groups

Focus groups were arranged for the group members at the Macmillan community garden and for the RFW staff members at WCHG to allow the researcher to focus on conversations that developed between group members rather than between participant and researcher. Krueger (1994, p. 6), defines a focus group as:

"a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment... conducted with approximately 7 to 10 people."

The Macmillan group was an ideal size for a focus group and the regularity of the sessions meant that group bonds were easily formed. This technique allowed for a useful insight into group dynamics and provided access to information expressed through a variety of forms of communication, such as jokes and disagreements (Kitzinger, 1995). The aim of the initial focus group was to open topics of interest and provide areas of knowledge or shared beliefs that were common to the group members. The use of focus groups also allowed voices to be heard from participants who seemed less at ease with the prospect of being interviewed on a one-to-one basis, particularly at the Macmillan community garden (Kitzinger, 1995). The resulting themes provided areas for investigation through subsequent semi-structured interviews with individuals. A final focus group was held at the Macmillan community garden in summer 2016 in order to explore new themes raised in the interviews and to revisit themes from the initial focus group.

3.4.4. Questionnaires

As an extension of observation and to reach people on the periphery of the growing activities, a questionnaire was piloted with the residents who live nearby to the Macmillan community garden. Of the ten properties approached, only three residents participated and a number of others were vocal in their disapproval of the interaction, making it clear that the survey was not welcome in the area. As a result of its poor reception and lack of uptake, and following concerns that the survey approach had the potential to cause apprehension in the neighbourhood, this part of the research was suspended in its early stages. A second questionnaire was designed for members of the public visiting the urban farm in order to investigate their perceptions of the site, the reasons for their visits and their attitudes towards growing in the city. The wider distribution of questionnaires was carried out in June 2016 following a pilot exercise in November 2015, where the questions were developed, trialled and amended as appropriate. The reason for the delay in completion of the questionnaire following the pilot was that the farm experiences a higher footfall during the summer as visitor attendance fluctuates dramatically depending on the

season. The survey was carried out on three separate occasions, whereby respondents were approached and selected through convenience sampling as they entered the farm.

Due to the non-probabilistic nature of the sampling method, the conclusions to be drawn from the survey are necessarily limited (Battaglia, 2008). However, the intention of the survey was not to generalise the results to the wider population, rather its purpose was to add further breadth and description to the case study as a whole. The sample size of respondents at the farm was determined using data saturation. The concept originates from Glaser and Strass' grounded theory, but is distinct from theoretical saturation in that the former indicates an end to data collection once no new ideas/concepts arise and the latter describes the saturation and validation of categories in data analysis using the grounded theory method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). The principle of data saturation is commonly used in qualitative research for this purpose (Mason, 2010).

3.5. Fieldwork

This section summarises the process of conducting fieldwork, from the initial stages of scoping exercises, identifying gate keepers and gaining access to research sites, to a description of approaches taken at each site of interest. This section is followed by a description of the process of analysis in section 3.6.

3.5.1. Gaining access

In order to implement a research plan and to investigate the phenomena under investigation, the researcher must first gain access to the sites of interest and the people from whom they wish to learn. Feldman, Bell, and Berger (2004, p. vii) describe access as establishing a position from which the researcher can "learn from the people [they] are talking with and observing", stressing it is "not something that is gained once and for all but a process that can be developed and enriched over time". The process of gaining access to the RFW project began in 2014, as a result of the University of Salford partnering with RFW in order to conduct the evaluation of the project. Due to the university's existing ties with the organisation, initially accessing the project's activities was relatively unproblematic and observations began in late 2014 enabling an overview of the project and the identification

of key actors. An initial baseline study was conducted by the University of Salford in 2015, using questionnaires to gain a surface-level understanding of eating habits, shopping habits and attitudes to food and growing in Wythenshawe. The researcher's involvement in the development and implementation of the questionnaire allowed access to project activities, growing sites and to key actors, including gatekeepers for potential research sites. The questionnaire raised relevant issues regarding eating and growing habits in Wythenshawe, providing a springboard for a more in-depth study of the impacts of the growing activities initiated and supported by RFW.

Access to the Macmillan community garden was achieved through contact with the group organiser as a result of information provided by the RFW project team. Attendance at the urban farm growing sessions was established through visits with the RFW growing coordinator, who acted as the group leader and organised sessions on a weekly basis. Once contact had been made with the two case study sites the sessions were attended on a fortnightly or weekly basis in order to develop a rapport with the group members and to gain a more in-depth understanding of the growing activities and group dynamics. Through regular attendance at RFW events and activities between 2014 and 2016, a familiarity was established between the researcher and the project staff and participants. Although the position of the researcher was always made clear, this level of immersion allowed for an in-depth appreciation of perceptions and experiences.

3.5.2. RFW project overview

Fieldwork at all three points of focus was carried out between late 2014 and summer 2016. Research commenced with observations at WCHG through spending two days every week working from the same office as the RFW project team and attending meetings and events. There are currently four full-time and one part-time member of staff running the project from WCHG: the project manager, three coordinators and an administrator (see 4.3.3 for further details). All staff members took part in an initial focus group and all full-time staff members were interviewed individually at a later date. The funding bid for the RFW project was written prior to the employment of the core team of staff and the staff members running the project were not involved in the original bid. In order to provide a comprehensive overview, two of the authors of the original bid were also interviewed

following an informal interview with one of the project authors early on in the research. Details of the interview participants for this part of the research are summarised in the table below and discussed further in Chapter 4.

| Name | Occupation |
|-------------|--|
| Jacqueline | RFW Project Manager |
| Rachel | RFW Education Coordinator |
| Kay | RFW Growing Coordinator |
| Pam | RFW Cooking Coordinator |
| Susan | RFW Administrator (part-time) |
| Leanne | RFW Volunteer Coordinator (voluntary) |
| Serena | Previous RFW Growing Coordinator |
| Sally | Assistant Director, Community Investment and Regeneration, WCHG |
| Daphne | Co-author of funding bid, Independent Researcher |
| Fiona | Co-author of funding bid, Head of Client Advocacy for a creative communications agency |

Table 1. Bid authors, RFW and WCHG staff names and occupations

3.5.3. Macmillan community garden

Having established access to the Macmillan community garden through the group organiser, the site was attended on a fortnightly basis during the growing season of 2015. An initial focus group was arranged following a number of site visits and observations. Following the focus group, all members of the group (with one exception) were interviewed individually. Although some members of the group were not able to attend the growing sessions every week due to health issues, a dedicated group of participants attended regularly and identifying core group members for interview was unproblematic.

In the final stages of data collection, a final focus group was held in order to reflect on the two previous growing sessions and to gather together ideas and thoughts regarding the process of setting up a meanwhile growing site.

| Name of interviewee | Position | Gender | Wythenshawe Resident? | Additional information |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Daniel | Macmillan volunteer | Male | Yes | Retired |
| Graham | Macmillan volunteer/gatekeeper | Male | No | Retired |
| Sadie | Macmillan volunteer | Female | No | Self-employed horticulturalist |
| Matthew | Participant | Male | No | Retired |
| Tony | Participant | Male | Yes | Retired |
| John | Participant | Male | No | Retired |
| Bob | Participant | Male | Yes | Retired |

Table 2. List of participants interviewed at the Macmillan community garden

3.5.4. Wythenshawe Farm

Growing sessions at the farm were attended on a weekly or fortnightly basis during the growing season in 2015 and in early 2016. Participation of group members was rather more sporadic at the farm than at the community garden, and on occasion, there was just one other person in attendance. During the first six months of research, approximately five people regularly attended the sessions, and this increased to around seven during 2016. For this reason, interviews were carried out in both 2015 and 2016. In addition to the growing session participants, two members of farm staff were interviewed and a short questionnaire was carried out with visitors to the farm.

| Name of Interviewee | Position | Gender | Wythenshawe Resident? | Additional Information |
|----------------------------|-----------------|---------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
|----------------------------|-----------------|---------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|

| | | | | |
|----------|---------------|--------|-----|--|
| Andrew | RFW volunteer | Male | Yes | Working age, unemployed, has been visiting park since he was very young |
| Amy | RFW volunteer | Female | Yes | Retired, recent cancer patient |
| Samantha | RFW volunteer | Female | Yes | Working age, show grower |
| Dean | RFW volunteer | Male | Yes | Working age, full-time carer |
| Dylan | RFW volunteer | Male | No | Retired, previously a Wythenshawe resident |
| Jennifer | Farm staff | Female | Yes | Works in farm, started as a volunteer |
| Isabel | Shop staff | Female | Yes | Previously worked for the council, lives locally, Friend of Wythenshawe Hall |

Table 3. List of participants interviewed at Wythenshawe Farm

3.6. Analysis

Interviews were recorded using a Dictaphone and were manually transcribed by the researcher. Field notes were collected throughout the duration of the research, and were read and reflected upon continuously in order to inform interview questions and to frame discussions. In this sense, the analysis was an ongoing process from the beginning of the data collection process and was influenced by the concept of constant comparative analysis from grounded theory (Birks & Mills, 2015).

As per Charmaz's description of grounded theory coding, the transcripts were analysed through a process of initial or open coding, where the aim is to "remain open to all possible theoretical directions indicated by the readings of the data" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). The process of in-depth readings and constant comparison allows for continuous interaction

with transcripts and encourages the construction of theory from the data using emergent rather than preconceived codes (Charmaz, 2006). Once initial codes were defined, categories were developed through a process of intermediate or “axial” coding (Birks & Mills, 2015). While initial coding is seen to fracture the data, intermediate coding is a process whereby the sections of data can be drawn together into coherent categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). NVivo 11 was used to develop the thematic coding framework (see Figure 6 below). The central themes that emerged through the coding process were then developed further and used to build a narrative that explored the impacts experienced by the project participants and the motivations driving participation and implementation.

| Name | Sources | References | Created On | Created By | Modified On | Modified By |
|--|---------|------------|------------------|------------|------------------|-------------|
| Thematic coding framework | | | | | | |
| Motivation | 0 | 0 | 03/05/2016 14:57 | RSC | 03/08/2016 12:54 | RSC |
| Impact | 0 | 0 | 18/04/2016 12:10 | RSC | 18/04/2016 12:12 | RSC |
| Social | 0 | 0 | 17/05/2016 11:56 | RSC | 08/08/2016 15:46 | RSC |
| Multiple | 2 | 2 | 17/05/2016 11:58 | RSC | 08/08/2016 15:35 | RSC |
| Therapy | 0 | 0 | 17/05/2016 11:58 | RSC | 08/08/2016 15:51 | RSC |
| Home growing | 6 | 11 | 17/05/2016 13:21 | RSC | 08/08/2016 17:22 | RSC |
| Ripple effect | 2 | 2 | 17/05/2016 15:08 | RSC | 20/06/2016 15:02 | RSC |
| Education and knowledge exchange | 5 | 12 | 10/06/2016 12:06 | RSC | 08/08/2016 15:33 | RSC |
| Large numbers of people vs small | 3 | 5 | 20/06/2016 16:56 | RSC | 08/08/2016 15:16 | RSC |
| Financial support | 1 | 2 | 20/06/2016 17:07 | RSC | 20/06/2016 17:08 | RSC |
| Impact limited to people with an existin | 2 | 4 | 08/08/2016 15:17 | RSC | 08/08/2016 15:21 | RSC |
| Produce | 0 | 0 | 08/08/2016 15:30 | RSC | 08/08/2016 15:30 | RSC |

Figure 6. Example of thematic coding framework developed by the researcher using NVivo 11 (QSR International Pty Ltd., 2015)

3.7. Ethical considerations

For participants to be involved in focus groups and semi-structured interviews, written consent was required in the form of signed informed consent forms (please see Appendix 1 for a sample consent form). For questionnaires with members of the public, which were not intended to supply such a depth of information, verbal consent was gained prior to the discussion:

"For surveys or informal interviews, where no personal data are gathered or personal identifiers are removed from the data, obtaining written consent may not be required."

(UK Data Service, 2015)

The participants were made aware of the ways the information was to be collected, processed and stored and each participant was made aware that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their anonymity, with the exception of RFW project staff, as it was felt that these actors would be easily identified by their roles within the organisation. Additional consent was gained to use real names in these cases. The study adhered to the University of Salford's data protection guidelines, which are formed in accordance with the eight principles of The Data Protection Act 1998. For example, in accordance with principle seven, personal data was kept secure on a password-protected computer (University of Salford, n.d.). The British Sociological Association (BSA) guidelines were followed throughout the project. The BSA offers a comprehensive statement of ethical practice that includes guidelines on professional integrity, relationships with research participants and anonymity, privacy and confidentiality (British Sociological Association, 2017).

3.8. Reflexivity and positionality*

**In order to describe the process of observation from the perspective of the researcher, the following section is written in first person.*

Reflexivity encourages the development of a deeper sense of self-awareness, reminding researchers that our very presence influences the outcomes of the research, while positionality asks that we consider how we are situated within the context of the research, for instance in considering our background, ethnicity, gender and societal privileges (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2010; Rose, 1997). This process of self-reflection acts as an acknowledgement that researchers cannot simply observe as impartial outsiders, but must instead embrace the subjectivities that participation necessitates. As Finlay and Gough (2008, p. 1) state:

“Reflexivity is a challenge to conventional ideals of science which favour professional distance and objectivity over engagement and subjectivity.”

From the beginning of my fieldwork, I was keen – perhaps naively - to observe in a way that had as little impact on the course of events as possible, while at the same time being aware that my presence would influence the project and its activities regardless of how detached I attempted to remain. While observing at the three different points of focus, it became clear that self-reflection was a necessary part of my field notes and at the end of each entry, I would make space for a passage that discussed my observations in a more personal way and analysed my response, whether verbalised or internalised, within the context of events.

This section attempts to shed light on my considerations of positionality and reflexivity by offering some examples of my experiences from different areas of my fieldwork, beginning with my time at the WCHG office and ending with the urban farm and Macmillan community garden. At the very early stages of my research, I found it necessary to consider my own position and how I was perceived within the RFW team. One morning, just after I had arrived in the office, a member of the team commented that they would have to be “on their best behaviour” because I would be in the office that day. Although the comment was presented in jest, it alerted me to the idea that while I had initially perceived the RFW team as colleagues, they appeared to view me as an outsider, perhaps almost as a consultant who was there to assess the benefits of the project and to report its successes. This gave me cause to reflect on my own behaviour and try to assess whether this “outsider” status was in fact beneficial as it may allow me to view the project in a slightly more detached way than if I were to become heavily involved. On the other hand, I was concerned that if the project staff viewed me as someone who needed to be shielded from any negative impressions of the project, I may not be able to provide a full and fair assessment of its progress. This concern began to evaporate as I attended project events and conversed with the project team more frequently. I considered my position to be an involved outsider who was available for assistance when required and I became familiar with the project through continued engagement but did not become a full team member and was never given a responsible role for the implementation of the project. This balance

between distance and engagement suited my research style as it allowed me closeness to the project but enabled a level of detachment.

The relationships with the group members from the two study sites were easier to negotiate from the beginning. The Macmillan community garden participants were mostly retired, white men. They made their feelings regarding my attendance quite clear to begin with and I documented this throughout my time there. When I first arrived at the site, I was met with a mixture of enthusiasm and curiosity. I explained on numerous occasions the reason for my involvement and quickly seemed to be accepted as part of the group. After only a few weeks, I was regularly the butt of jokes (particularly relating to me being a “soft southerner”), and during quieter moments, I had long chats with individuals who continued to surprise me with their capacity for honesty and openness with a relative stranger. By the end of the growing season, I had been invited to barbeques and group meals and had met some members’ spouses and family members. The welcoming nature of the group had led to me develop a fondness for them, which later had the potential to become problematic during conflicts that the group had with the RFW team. Reflexivity became an invaluable tool for acknowledging my position and for considering how to frame my response when met with requests to “take sides”. I became particularly aware of my position and background at the urban farm during the weekly growing sessions, where political discussions were commonplace and a number of members were frank about financial or social difficulties they had experienced or were currently experiencing. These occasions helped me to understand my own societal privilege, frequently in ways that I had not previously considered.

3.9. Summary

In summary, the PhD research has adopted a case study approach to investigate the impact of UA in Wythenshawe, providing a commentary during the course of the RFW project in the form of an overview of the project's core activities and in-depth case studies of two contrasting sites using ethnographically-led qualitative techniques to explore participant and non-participant perceptions of UA in Wythenshawe. The research strategy included a combination of focus groups, semi-structured interviews, participant observation and questionnaires, in order to achieve a breadth and a depth of understanding of both the

implementation of RFW and the impact and perceptions of its activities. The use of a constructivist grounded theory approach has enabled themes to emerge from the data, facilitating the comparison of two case study sites along with reflections on the top-down approach of the project and the experiences of its participants on the ground.

Chapter 4

Introduction to Wythenshawe and Real Food Wythenshawe: Intervening from the Top-down

4.1. Introduction

This chapter seeks to situate empirical findings within the context of the place of research, and to provide an understanding of the RFW project's aims and mode of implementation. It begins by introducing the district of Wythenshawe, which was designed and built in the interwar period as part of the garden city movement and has experienced numerous changes since its initial development. This is followed by a description of RFW, the UA project that provides the focus of this thesis, which is situated within the historical and contemporary context of the district of Wythenshawe. Interviews and observations with project staff and partners are drawn upon to identify early ambitions for RFW and to explore the motivations, attitudes and expectations of the staff running the project, including the ways in which they hoped the project would influence the surrounding area and their methods of encouraging public participation.

4.2. Wythenshawe: A garden city for the 21st century

Historically the site south of the River Mersey, now known as Wythenshawe, was a large area of farmland owned by the Tatton Family since the thirteenth century (Wythenshawe History Group, n.d.). During the interwar period England saw an unprecedented suburban expansion with over 4 million new homes built in the suburbs between 1919 and 1939 (Hollow, 2011) and it was during this time that the estate was brought into local authority ownership, facilitating the rapid expansion of social housing in the outskirts of Manchester. The late professor of geography Doreen Massey, who spent her childhood in Wythenshawe described the district and its history:

“In less than a hundred years “this place” has passed from aristocratic landownership, through municipal socialism, toward attempts at neoliberal privatization, The breathing out and in of individual lives has been set in

counterpoint with programs of social reconstruction that have made and remade this place on a wider social canvas”.

(Massey, 2001, p. 460)

Wythenshawe’s development, influenced by the principles of Ebenezer Howard's garden city model, was driven by the need to provide a higher standard of living for residents of crowded inner-city areas. In the original concept of a garden city, Howard envisaged cities with approximately 30,000 residents with shared landownership, joined together in larger decentralised networks, together referred to as the “social city” (see Figure 7) (Ward, 1992, p. 2). The development of the new satellite town in Manchester was seen as a progressive step and was referred to by Simon and Inman (1935, p. 36) as the “most imaginative and important enterprise which the Manchester City Council has undertaken for many years”. The design encouraged urban growing with the provision of space for food cultivation to bring residents “back to the land” and to increase access to fresh food (Battersby & Marshak, 2013; Hall, 2002; Howe & Wheeler, 1999). As Barry Parker, the urban planner leading the project stated:

"The objective is to secure around the house the air space requisite for health, to grow vegetables and fruit for our table... to surround ourselves with pleasant places in which to live and work, rest and play, and to entertain friends."

(Hollow, 2011, p. 5)

Barry Parker’s plans included tree-lined roads, gardens for houses, public green spaces and an agricultural belt around the boundary of the district (see Figure 8). Construction in Wythenshawe began in 1927, and by 1939 over 35,000 people lived on the new estate (Hollow, 2011). As Gunn and Bell (2011) note, a move away from the crowded inner-city sprawl into a recently developed suburban cottage estate like Wythenshawe was seen as a way to advance social standing and respectability. Wythenshawe houses, referred to as “Homes fit for Heroes”, were intended to inspire the development of “decent citizens” and to avoid social revolutions by providing a greener, healthier and more pleasant living

environment for its new residents (Hughes & Hunt, 1992, p. 81). In reality, however, Hardy (2005) claims that the plans for Britain's third garden city were doomed from the start, and that what resulted was “little more than another large estate”, due in part to the intended population of Wythenshawe being over three times the upper limit envisioned in Howard’s model (Hardy, 1992, p. 198). While Wythenshawe has been marketed as one of the earliest garden cities and referred to as a garden city for the 21st century, Hardy (2005, p. 5) asserts that Howard would have “turned in his grave” had he known that Wythenshawe was promoted as a true example of a garden city.

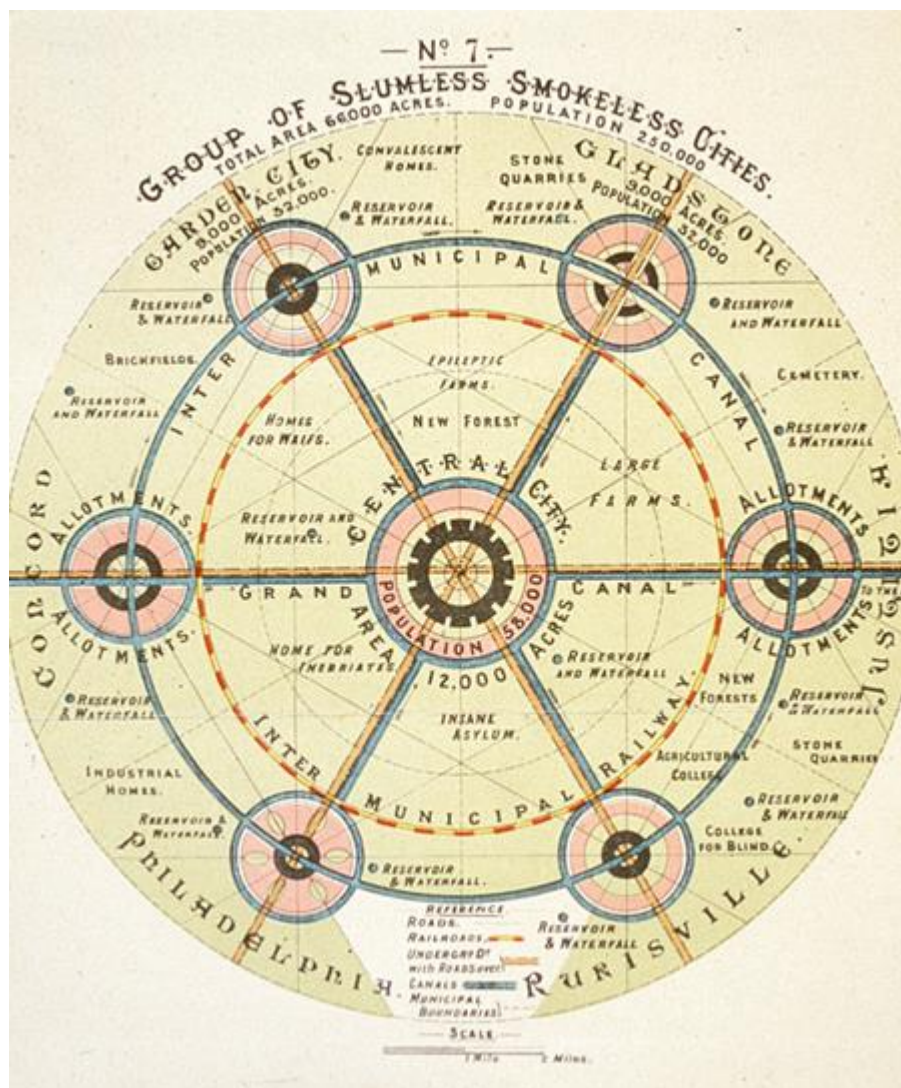


Figure 7. “Group of Slumless Smokeless Cities” from Ebenezer Howard’s 1898 book, *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (Sdoutz, 2013)

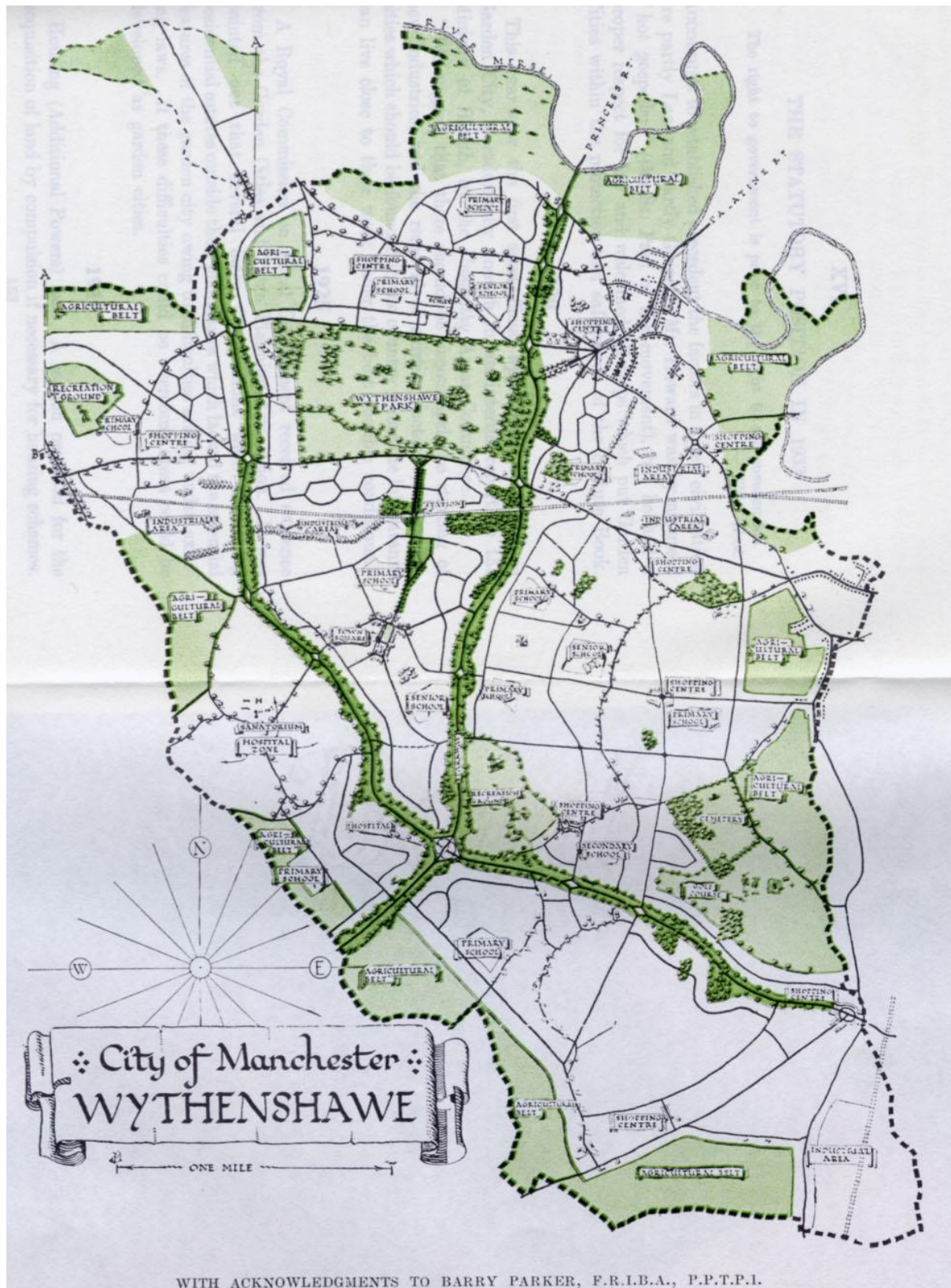


Figure 8. Barry Parker's Plan for Wythenshawe (Municipal Dreams, 2013)

Regardless of its disputed right to the title of garden city, Wythenshawe boasts high levels of green space including a large range of different types of green infrastructure such as parks, gardens, trees and fields. The district also contains the highest number of Sites of Biological Importance in Manchester (Countryside, 2015; Real Food Wythenshawe, 2015b). Historically, Wythenshawe residents have had a close relationship with their gardens. As Hollow (2011, p. 6) observes, early residents placed great importance on maintaining their gardens; succumbing to societal pressure to maintain a “respectable standard”. Opinions on acceptable standards were offered by both neighbours and external onlookers, including Barry Parker, who publicly asserted that residents should favour simplicity and avoid “falling into vulgarity” (Hawkes, 1986, p. 71). Residents’ gardens were also scrutinised by public figures during official tours of the district, and annual garden shows provided further opportunity for judgement. The first show was the Wythenshawe Garden Week in 1934 where residents were assessed on the “best cultivated and cleanest gardens”, “the nature of the soil and situation”, “the length of time the house had been occupied”, “assistance by professional gardeners” and “the amount of money spent” (Hollow, 2011, p. 12).

While a well-maintained garden was a source of pride for Wythenshawe residents, keeping their gardens “neat and cultivated” was also a stipulation of the council tenancy agreement and as such, could be viewed as an expensive and burdensome task (Hollow, 2011, p. 14). In reality, the City Council’s policing of gardening activities in Wythenshawe had the effect of limiting the freedom of residents to choose the contents of their own gardens, particularly if the desired furnishings did not fit with the received aesthetics. As Hollow (2011, pp. 15-16) reveals:

“In 1932, Mr Pennington received a notification informing him to remove a trellis that he had erected alongside his path on which to grow his sweet peas. He ignored the inspector’s directive but upon returning home one day “found it lying on the floor – they’d sent two men to pull it down”” ... “[Another former Wythenshawe resident] was told by the council that if he did not remove the trellis he had erected to keep his boy off the flower pots then they would send someone round to take it down.”

Council Inspectors were focused on ensuring that horticultural order was maintained but also that any objects found to be obstructing the view and, by extension, the external regulation of the gardens were removed. The behaviour displayed by council inspectors seems indicative of an attitude that social housing tenants should be offered the gesture of a garden, a personal place of leisure, but could not necessarily be trusted to produce and maintain their spaces without forms of external control. Another aspect of early control within the estate stemmed from “a deliberate policy by the Local Authorities” to discourage “disreputable leisure pursuits” and encourage gardening by providing only a small number of public houses and retail outlets in Wythenshawe (Hollow, 2011, p. 19). On this matter, the Wythenshawe History Group writes:

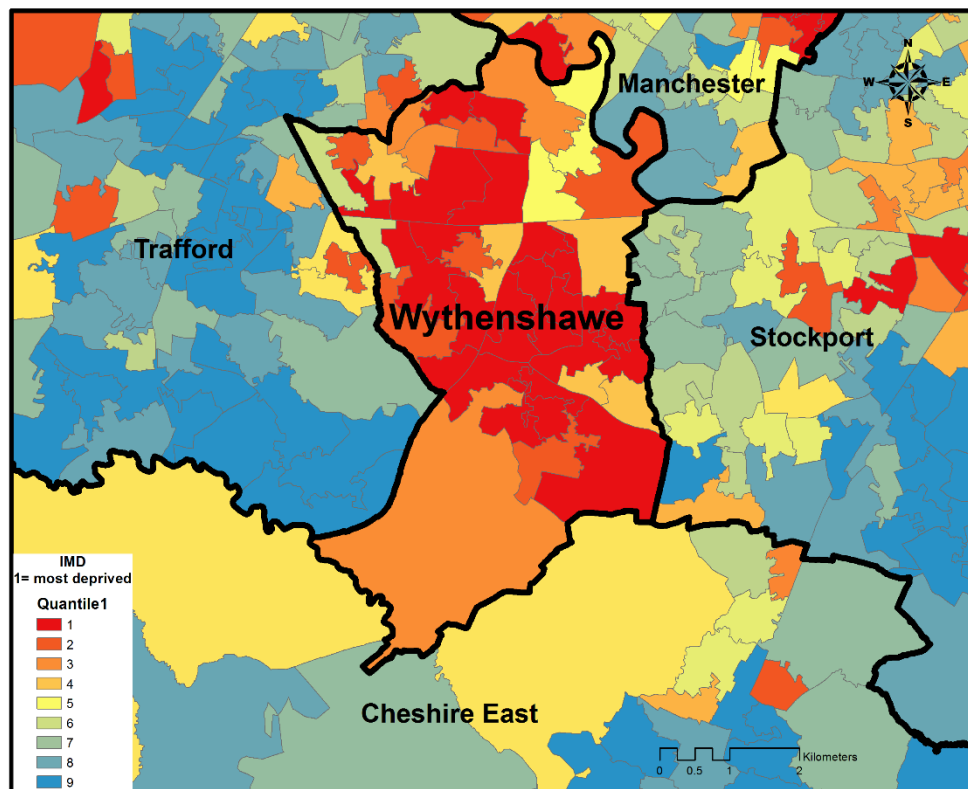
“The upheaval and resettlement of such large numbers of people from all the different communities took little account of social cohesion or community spirit, neither of which existed, so that by the late 20th century Wythenshawe suffered many social problems. First, the estate was built initially without shops, amenities or services, and second there was very little employment directly to hand.”

(Wythenshawe History Group, n.d., para. 3)

However well-meaning the plans for the new green residence, aspects of the early estate such as the absence of plans for local amenities and the hasty resettlement and integration of contrasting communities exposed a lack of understanding of the realities on the ground. This left new residents with green spaces over which they felt they had no control, and a lack of places to shop, relax, or work. Today, Wythenshawe’s central shopping area, the Civic Centre, contains a variety of shops and facilities (see Figure 9); however, this is in contrast with the wider district where residential areas, which still offer sparse provisions, are more characteristically furnished with small parades containing newsagents, fast food outlets and bookmakers. Wythenshawe has consequently been referred to as a food desert, a term contrasting starkly with the ideal of a garden city (Small World Consulting, 2013). Existing levels of deprivation (see Figure 10) and a lack of access to local fresh fruit and vegetables suggest that present-day Wythenshawe has strayed far from the green aspirations of its original design.



Figure 9. Wythenshawe Civic Centre (St. Modwen, n.d.)



**Figure 10. Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD): Wythenshawe and surrounding areas
(Department for Communities and Local Government, 2015)**

Key: Levels of deprivation are highest in the red areas and lowest in the blue areas

Wythenshawe currently ranks poorly in terms of multiple deprivation (see Figure 10) and particularly in relation to health deprivation and disability (Manchester City Council, 2015a). To offer examples specific to the study sites for this research, the area in which Wythenshawe Farm is located ranks 78 out of 32,844 Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in England for health deprivation (where 1 is the most deprived) and the area of the Macmillan community garden ranks 154 (Open Data Communities, 2015). Table 4 displays health deprivation data for the five electoral wards in Wythenshawe and their corresponding LSOAs:

| Electoral ward | No. of LSOAs assigned to ward | No. of LSOAs in most deprived 10% of England | % of ward with LSOAs in most deprived 10% nationally | Ward rank within Manchester (of 32) |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Baguley | 9 | 8 | 88.9% | 1 |
| Woodhouse Park | 8 | 8 | 100.0% | 2 |
| Sharston | 10 | 9 | 90.0% | 4 |
| Northenden | 9 | 6 | 66.7% | 10 |
| Brooklands | 8 | 5 | 62.5% | 21 |

Table 4. Health and Disability Deprivation in Wythenshawe electoral wards (Table adapted from Manchester City Council, 2015b)

In 1999, Willow Park Housing Trust was established when 6600 homes were transferred from Manchester City Council's housing stock in East Wythenshawe, and in 2006, Manchester City Council transferred approximately 6000 Wythenshawe homes to Parkway Green Housing Trust (Manchester City Council, 2006). This transfer of housing stock followed the trend of the (quasi-)privatisation of council housing on a large scale that began in the late 1970s. In 1980 the amount of municipal housing in the UK began to fall for the first time in 60 years with the percentage of homes rented from local authorities halved between 1979 and 2000 from 29% to just 14% (Ginsburg, 2005; Malpass & Mullins, 2002). WCHG was formed in 2013 following a merger between the two social housing providers in Wythenshawe and the combined housing group now manages close to 14,000 properties

in the district and houses over 20,000 people, making the company responsible for the homes of over a quarter of Wythenshawe's total population (Real Food Wythenshawe, 2012b; WCHG, 2017). Wythenshawe is currently undergoing a period of regeneration, with new investment in infrastructure including the recently extended Metrolink (city tram) service that now runs through Wythenshawe, and the development of Airport City, "a new urban quarter for a global city" that contains "offices, advanced manufacturing and logistics facilities, along with hotels and ancillary retail", stemming from Chinese-UK investment relationships (Airport City, n.d.). This level of investment may raise concerns for some regarding the potential for gentrification of the area and the associated displacement of lower-income residents; however, it is likely that these developments will lead to new employment opportunities and improve accessibility into and out of Wythenshawe. RFW, a Lottery-funded UA project represents another recent investment in the area and is introduced in the following section, which begins with a description of the origins and purpose of the project.

4.3. Real Food Wythenshawe: Background, purpose and implementation

In an attempt to address some of the diet-related health disparities along with the apparent lack of access to fresh food in Wythenshawe discussed in the previous section, and to bring existing greenspace into use for food growing, a new urban food initiative was established. This section introduces the RFW project and draws on interviews held with authors of the project funding bid to explore its origins and some of its early ambitions. The project's origins and design are introduced in 4.3.1 and its key activities are described in 4.3.2 as a means of providing context for the reader.

An objective of the research is to explore the motivations driving the project, initially from the top-down in order to later provide a comparison with the perceptions and opinions of the participants involved in the project activities on the ground. The remainder of the chapter is devoted to this objective with 4.3.3 offering an exploration of the backgrounds and motivations of project staff responsible for the project delivery and 4.3.4 describing some of the challenges in Wythenshawe from the perspective of the RFW project staff. This includes a perceived lack of knowledge among Wythenshawe residents regarding food provenance and preparation, a lack of access to fresh fruit and vegetables, and the

difficulties faced by residents through levels of deprivation in the area. It is important to reflect on these issues from the perspective of the project staff and to examine some of their working assumptions as the very existence of the project is justified based on a set of beliefs regarding certain capabilities and needs within the district. While these assumptions are touched upon in this chapter, they are also further explored in Chapter 6. The final two subsections of this chapter discuss the implementation of the project beginning with the ways in which the project staff members sought to create and communicate an effective message and their desire to stimulate community pride from the outside in, followed by a reflection of how the reality of the project may have differed from their expectations leading to particular compromises being made.

4.3.1. Project origins and design

RFW was one of 12 initiatives across the UK to receive £1 million from the Big Lottery Communities Living Sustainably (CLS) fund in 2012. The CLS stream was a £12 million funding programme that aimed to help communities in England to establish local resilience, encourage sustainable behaviour and to develop mechanisms to respond to the potential impacts of climate change (Groundwork, n.d.). RFW received funding for five years and the project is run by staff based at WCHG, the project's lead partner. The RFW project staff members were recruited after the funding had been awarded, and the team played no part in the initial project design. In order to gain an appreciation of the early ideas and ambitions of the project, interviews were held with two authors of the RFW funding application.

The idea for a food-growing initiative in Wythenshawe originated with plans by the Manchester International Festival (MIF) to install a vertical farm inside a disused office building called Alpha House (Aburawa, 2011). The vertical farm plans were eventually abandoned due to concerns over feasibility and affordability; however, following consultation within the local community, it was clear to the organisers that there was an appetite in Wythenshawe for growing food in a novel and engaging way. In response, MIF began to bring together partners to design a project that could harness the enthusiasm for growing within the community by using the available greenspace, improving access to fresh

fruit and vegetables, and addressing dietary and health issues through cookery education and engagement. As Fiona, one of the bid authors interviewed stated:

“MIF felt a responsibility not to just walk away from Wythenshawe and leave all these expectations up in the air, but to actually leave them with some sort of legacy... So [MIF] took the initiative and found the Lottery funding that ultimately was applied for and won.”

(Fiona, interview, July 2015)

Another author of the bid document, Daphne, conducted research within Wythenshawe in 2012 to assess existing growing and cooking networks and initiatives in preparation for the funding application and observed that there was already an active base of horticultural and culinary activities in the area:

“So with a little bit of resource, there would be a lot to be gained from coordinating and building capacity within existing groups in Wythenshawe... All it needed was a group of people that could draw people together, so that everybody was working more effectively with limited resources, rather than people duplicating work.”

(Daphne, interview, August 2015)

The revelation that there was already a substantial amount of growing activity in Wythenshawe suggested that the district could act as a suitable location to develop such a project. When asked if this type of intervention was particularly desired in Wythenshawe and whether the need was specific to the area, Daphne responded that it would be possible to “evidence similar things happening in any area of Manchester”, but that “in order to get funding, you needed to pick a disadvantaged community” (Daphne, interview, August 2015). A criticism of the bidding process was the tendency for funds to be awarded to larger organisations with the capacity to build a strong application, limiting the potential for smaller grassroots or special interest groups to benefit from significant funds:

“If communities haven’t got the capacity within themselves to do that work, and run their organisations as they need to anyway, you end up having to buy in people, and [that] can be quite expensive... If you think about an organisation that’s already running on a shoestring, for them to try and find money to do that kind of evidence gathering, it’s almost impossible. And so what tends to happen is that the money goes to larger organisations that have those kind of resources.”

(Daphne, interview, August 2015)

The case of RFW supports this assertion and one of the strengths of the application appeared to be the support offered by the two housing associations who acted as the project’s lead partners, pledging to provide a stable base for activities and additional in-kind support. The criticism does however raise interesting questions regarding the nature of the funding landscape, particularly if favouring larger, more financially stable organisations takes place at the expense of smaller, specialist operations with specific expertise. As a result of the successful bid, RFW was awarded the Lottery funds in September 2012 and the project began in February 2013 following the recruitment of the project manager and the subsequent employment of the three project coordinators. The budget was held by the recently formed WCHG, and the project staff worked from WCHG offices.

4.3.2. A summary of the project’s aims and activities

The project began with a number of distinct aims. These are summarised from the project funding bid document as follows:

1. “[Engaging] a new generation in Wythenshawe... in food, developing their awareness of the connections between the food they eat, their health, and climate change”
2. Developing “a network of community growing and cooking initiatives, engaging with those most in need of access to healthy food and exercise, and develop[ing] new initiatives where there is an unmet need”

3. “[Increasing] the scale, variety and connectivity of local food production – maximising the use of local green spaces at all scales and moving towards continuous urban food production”
4. “[Increasing the availability of] reasonably priced, sustainably produced and locally grown food through development of food businesses, social enterprises and markets which meet community needs”
5. “[Enhancing] understanding in the community of the benefits to both climate and health of a more sustainable diet”
6. “[The development of] projects that look to generate employment and training initiatives, with real jobs, apprenticeships and internships”

(Real Food Wythenshawe, 2012b, p. 7)

The project bid was composed by authors with a background in environmental sustainability and the project design took a holistic approach that saw the needs of the population, in terms of health outcomes, food poverty and food access, as inextricably linked to issues such as to food, climate change and sustainability. The vision of the whole project is described in the paragraph below:

“Our vision is a garden city for the 21st century, maximising the productive use of Wythenshawe’s abundant green spaces to deliver a significant shift towards more sustainable lifestyles and a secure food future for the people of Wythenshawe. As well as a comprehensive programme of activities around growing, cooking and eating healthy, sustainable food, we will stimulate discussion around sustainable urban food production through community engagement in the building and running of innovative indoor growing systems.”

(Real Food Wythenshawe, 2012b, p. 7)

RFW focuses on three main project themes, *growing, cooking and learning*, encompassed within five key ‘flagship’ areas described in the table below:

| Flagship | Description |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Cooking and Eating Sustainably | Helping Wythenshawe residents to develop cookery skills and to increase knowledge around sustainable, local ingredients. Activities include cookery demonstrations, clubs and classes. The team has installed a demonstration kitchen in the Wythenshawe Civic Centre where healthy affordable meals are prepared in view of passers-by and recipe cards are distributed. The team has also worked with the Wythenshawe Food Poverty Group to set up 'Unit-E', a food storage warehouse and distribution centre. |
| 2. The Geodome | The geodome is a closed-loop indoor growing system located on the Wythenshawe campus of The Manchester College. It is used as an educational resource to teach school students about the provenance of their food and as an instrument through which young people are introduced to environmental issues. Construction and plumbing students from the college helped to build the geodome while students working towards a horticulture qualification assisted with landscaping and vegetable growing. The geodome displays some innovative growing techniques such as aquaponics, hydroponics, fungiculture and vermiculture, inspiring students about the possibilities of growing vegetables in new and exciting ways. Tours and workshops at the geodome are offered to all primary and secondary schools in the area and volunteering sessions take place on a weekly basis. |
| 3. Green Spaces to Growing Spaces | RFW aims to transform some of Wythenshawe's green areas into productive spaces. This aspect of the project focuses on residents' gardens, interstitial spaces between houses, flats and shops, and public areas such as transport interchanges, in an attempt to raise public awareness |

| | |
|--|--|
| | around food growing. Seeds and plants are also distributed and exchanged. |
| 4. Mapping and Harvesting Abundance | This flagship involves mapping and harvesting produce from fruit trees, allotments and growing spaces in Wythenshawe, such as Wythenshawe Farm in order to increase access to and awareness of locally produced food. Activities include apple sourcing and pressing, mapping fruit trees and tree planting workshops. |
| 5. Wythenshawe Park Walled Garden and Farm | Wythenshawe Park walled garden and farm have acted as a centre for community growing and training activities. RFW runs a weekly growing session based at different locations within the park including the walled garden, the horticultural centre and the farm. The Wythenshawe Farm shop has been relaunched and currently stocks local fruit and vegetables, Wythenshawe honey, and meat produced from livestock on the farm. |

Table 5. Description of the five Real Food Wythenshawe Flagship Projects (Real Food Wythenshawe, 2012a)

Represented within the RFW flagships is a wide range of the various forms of UA activities. The project supports traditional forms of UA such as allotment groups but also promotes newer examples including community gardens. The geodome lies at the more radical end of the UA spectrum, displaying novel growing techniques and acting as an educational resource for school pupils. RFW also seeks to support individuals and families who wish to grow their own vegetables at home, from the smaller scale of growing herbs on windowsills, to the larger scale of providing people with raised beds and topsoil to enable them to cultivate vegetable patches in their gardens. As discussed in section 3.5, fieldwork for this research was carried out at two contrasting sites: Wythenshawe Farm, and Macmillan community garden, which was developed on WCHG land as part of the Green Spaces to Growing Spaces flagship (as previously discussed in sections 3.5.3 and 3.5.4). Observations were also carried out at WCHG offices where staff members were

interviewed regarding their roles and their aspirations for the project. This aspect of the research is the focus of the following sections.

4.3.3. RFW project implementation: Background and motivations

The RFW team is composed of one part-time and four full-time paid staff members including one manager, one administrator and three coordinators each responsible for one of the main areas of focus: cooking, growing and learning. Of the five paid RFW staff members, two live in Wythenshawe and three live in other areas. Of the three who live in areas outside Wythenshawe, all have previous experience of community-based work within Wythenshawe and feel they know the area well. The current growing coordinator was appointed following the resignation of the previous growing coordinator and as such is the most recent addition to the team. A part-time volunteer, who also works from the WCHG offices one day per week, administers the recruitment of the majority of the project's volunteers and participants. All staff members were interviewed including the previous growing coordinator and the office-based volunteer.

As mentioned previously, RFW is an institution-led or top-down UA project run by staff based at, and working in partnership with the local social housing provider. For WCHG, RFW presents the opportunity for meaningful engagement in the community and the potential to “make the lives of people in Wythenshawe better” (Sally, interview, June 2016). In a pragmatic sense, WCHG favours this type of arrangement because “if local people are healthy and in jobs then they’re much more likely to be able to pay their rent and be good tenants” (Sally, interview, June 2016). The partnership also represented good value from the perspective of the housing group, as RFW functions in a way that is close to being “cost neutral” for the organisation. As Sally described, RFW “sits on the side of [WCHG]; It can use all the HR, all the finance, all of the different policies and procedures and strengths from across the business... So it’s almost like this host organisation that you can plug different projects onto” (Sally, interview, June 2016). The professional backgrounds of the project coordinators and its association with WCHG had the effect of inviting external criticisms regarding the project's grassroots credentials. Conversely, observations at WCHG suggested that the project staff generally viewed the partnership in a positive light, believing that it afforded RFW more credibility and influence, with

Jacqueline noting that, “If you say, “Oh we’re from WCHG”, people automatically think this is something bona fide” (Jacqueline, interview, November 2015).

Project coordinators were attracted to the project for a variety of reasons. For Serena, the first growing coordinator, it was the opportunity to follow her passion for local food and community development and to work in an urban environment to “connect people to green spaces” (Serena, interview, July 2014). For Rachel, the learning coordinator, the idea of a holistic project that encompassed growing, cooking and eating influenced her desire to become involved. Kay, the existing growing coordinator, was inspired by the opportunity the project presented to focus on Wythenshawe’s history, promoting the area as a garden city and moving away from its recent negative portrayal in the media. Susan, the project administrator emphasised the importance of working in her local community to make a difference, and similarly, Pam, the cooking coordinator saw the importance of using her skills to make a difference in the community through educating people about food. For Jacqueline, the project manager, her involvement stemmed from a desire to help people in Wythenshawe and to improve its reputation by “flying the flag” for Wythenshawe and helping to change the way people viewed the district (Jacqueline, focus group, November 2015). She also expressed a general enthusiasm for the novelty of the project, seeing it as an exciting opportunity. The desire to help the community was a common thread through interview responses. This ambition tended to stem from a perception that Wythenshawe residents lack certain opportunities, knowledge and access to social capital that are available to people in more affluent surrounding areas. These issues are discussed further in the following section.

4.3.4. Challenges in Wythenshawe and the context of deprivation

This section explores some of the challenges in Wythenshawe from the perspective of the RFW staff in order to better understand the motivations driving the project implementation. From observations and interviews with RFW staff and a WCHG manager, perceived problems in Wythenshawe that the project seeks to address include a lack of access to fresh fruit and vegetables and a lack of knowledge around food, particularly food preparation. The staff felt that these issues were compounded by a widespread lack of ambition among residents and a readiness to accept circumstance rather than striving for

change and challenging the status quo. Discussions surrounding low levels of ambition and aspirations in Wythenshawe attributed these traits to underlying phenomena including a sub-standard level of education offered in the district, a lack of multi-culturalism and integration with surrounding areas and the associated low levels of employment and high levels of deprivation.

During a focus group interview with RFW staff, Jacqueline described the lack of availability of fresh fruit and vegetables in Wythenshawe as “a really, really massive issue”, noting that only three supermarkets serve the entire district (Jacqueline, focus group, November 2015). Staff members had a number of theories to explain the dearth of food retail outlets in the area. Jacqueline felt that Wythenshawe had been written off as a place and allowed to fall into disadvantage during the 1970s and 90s, with Pam recalling that as a child growing up locally, she was not allowed to visit Wythenshawe at all:

“I was told I couldn’t come to Wythenshawe by my parents. Because if you went into Wythenshawe, you wouldn’t come out... I only lived in Sale, but if my mum had’ve found out that I’d come into Wythenshawe for any reason I would’ve been grounded.”

(Pam, focus group, November 2015)

As Jacqueline observed, “if you can whip up that rumour about an area... services withdraw from it” (Jacqueline, focus group, November 2015), and it is precisely this type of negative portrayal of Wythenshawe that the team sees as their responsibility to refute. This is partly to engender a greater sense of pride in the area among local residents, but also to encourage investment in Wythenshawe, ensuring the improved provision of facilities and an enhanced standard of living. In addition to an external reluctance to enter Wythenshawe, several interviewees commented that many Wythenshawe residents rarely venture out of the district. Kay expressed surprise at “how many people have never even left Wythenshawe”, having “met lots of people across the generations who don’t go into Manchester”, with Pam adding that “a lot of people don’t even cross into the other wards” (Kay and Pam, focus group, November 2015). This limited flow was not restricted to the scale of the daily commute. Observations extended to the absence of cultural development

within the community due to a relatively stagnant population with few people moving into and out of the area. Interviewees viewed this as a limiting factor that hinders residents' ability to experience diversity. As Sally, a manager at WCHG discussed:

"Communities with minority populations... bring in cookery skills and passion for food and the ability to shop for fresh produce with them... When you have a large number of people who have that demand in the same place, then markets tend to spring up and people can access that food. That's never happened in Wythenshawe. We've remained largely a white, working-class population."

(Sally, interview, June 2016)

At the time of the most recent UK census in 2011, the five electoral wards contained within Wythenshawe had a white population of over 85% with Woodhouse Park at 87%, Sharston at 85.3%, Northenden at 85.4%, Baguley at 85% and Brooklands at 86.4%. This is significantly higher than Manchester's average of 66.6% (see Figure 11) (Manchester City Council, 2011). The staff viewed the possibility of cultural changes positively, with Jacqueline describing Wythenshawe residents as people who do not "make a fuss about anything" and instead "accept their lot" (Jacqueline, focus group, November 2015). Through her experience working in other areas of Manchester, Jacqueline observed that in comparison, people in Wythenshawe appeared to lack ambition and drive:

"I'd always worked in central Manchester, where a lot of refugee communities were, and we used to run all sorts of different courses [which] were always full because people from refugee countries had massive ambition to improve their lives... I came to work in Wythenshawe and I felt it was completely flat."

(Jacqueline, focus group, November 2015)

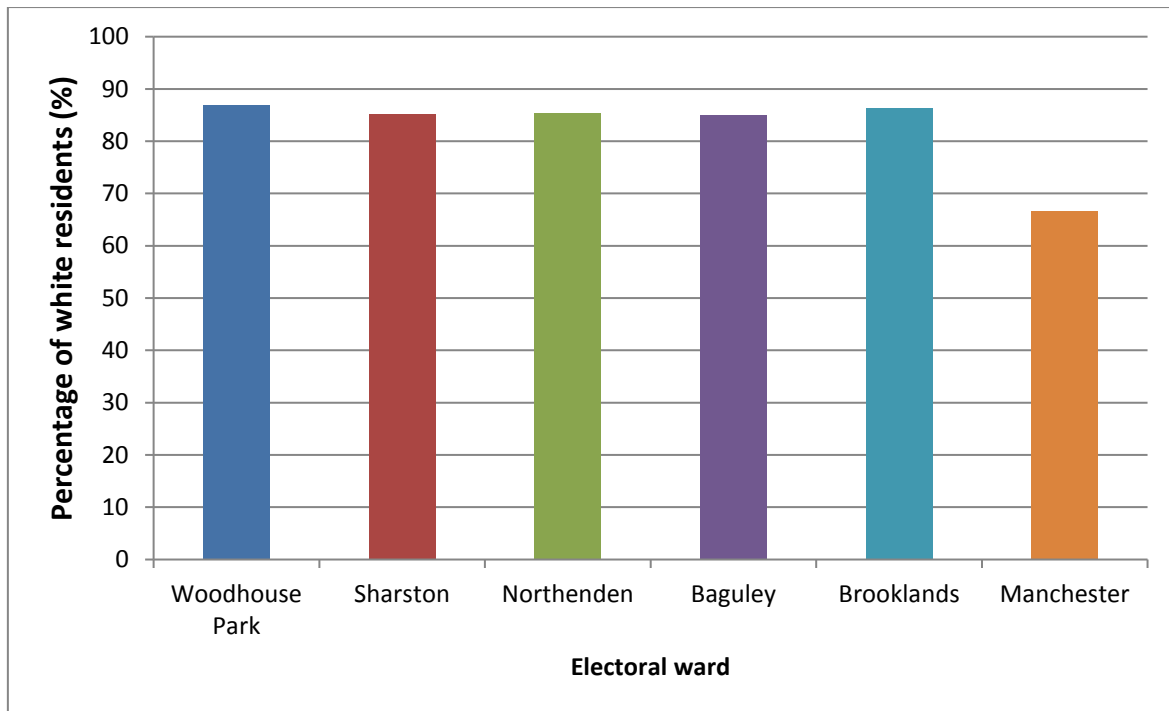


Figure 11. Percentage of white residents in Wythenshawe compared with the whole of Manchester (all white ethnic groups) (Manchester City Council, 2011)

Interviewees attributed the perceived lack of ambition among Wythenshawe residents to poor educational opportunities in the area, with staff recalling that “none of the sixth form colleges in Wythenshawe offer A-levels... so if you’ve got aspirations; you have to go outside Wythenshawe” (Rachel, focus group, November 2015). They also hypothesised that the lack of ambition and drive among Wythenshawe residents is galvanised at an early age. Sally related this to the idea that Wythenshawe schools have a disproportionately high number of students with above average levels of need, leaving schools in the area with insufficient resources to provide adequate opportunities for their students. To illustrate her point, Sally recalled an example of one pupil she met at a local school during a visit:

“[He] is a young carer, their mum’s an alcoholic and dad’s out of the picture. He also looks after gran. So before he comes to school in the morning, he will check to see if his mum’s okay, he will go and get his gran’s breakfast, he will try and find some clothes that he can put on and take to school..., he’ll probably be shouted at as well. So by the time he’s got to school, if that’s five

minutes or ten minutes late, actually that's a massive achievement for him..., compared to a kid down the road who gets chauffeur-driven to school."

(Sally, interview, June 2016)

Sally's observations suggest that an imbalance between levels of need and available resources contribute to a cycle of deprivation resulting in low expectations and fewer opportunities, accompanied and exacerbated by suppressed levels of social capital for children in the area:

"[In other areas] you'll be talking to someone whose dad is a lawyer or an accountant... whereas if you haven't got those opportunities, you don't know people in those jobs and you don't think that it's achievable for you... That kind of social capital and networking is incredibly important for kids and their education."

(Sally, interview, June 2016)

Social capital is recognised by Bourdieu (2011, p. 86) as "the aggregate of actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of collectively owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various sense of the word". This "credit" is something to which people in varying socioeconomic levels of society have differing levels of access. It represents an almost imperceptible and insidious type of privilege that many people never have cause to consider regardless of the level of access they enjoy and it is an important concept when considering levels of injustices within society.

Jacqueline suggested that failings in local schooling through the years meant that schools "were turning out local young people that couldn't read or write" (Jacqueline, focus group, November 2015). The team linked this gap in skills to the low percentage of employment opportunities for residents within Wythenshawe. They hypothesised that the associated

low levels of self-esteem led to a diminished sense of self-belief, imposed through years of insufficient services and opportunities:

“If you’re on benefits, if you’re off on long-term sick then the state makes you feel, the media makes you feel like you’re rubbish. You’re not contributing, you’re not worthwhile, you might as well not be in our society. You’re just sucking, you’re a scrounger... If you have that around you for long enough then you believe it yourself!”

(Sally, interview, June 2016)

Poor standards of education, a lack of opportunities and diversity within Wythenshawe were all discussed as potential contributory factors to the perceived lack of ambition among Wythenshawe residents. RFW staff members spoke of the forthcoming developments at Manchester Airport, with a planned investment of £80 billion, creating new employment opportunities in the area. Jacqueline predicted that Wythenshawe residents would be unlikely to be qualified for the new positions, adding that it is “ridiculous” to bring “young people in from other areas to come and work in Wythenshawe, where they really need the young people to feel that they can go for those jobs that are going” (Jacqueline, focus group, November 2015).

The specific aims of RFW, such as increasing access to fresh fruit and vegetables and improving local knowledge around food preparation, may appear to have only a tenuous connection to educational opportunities, ambition and cultural diversity in the district; however, they are recurring themes throughout observations and interviews and the acknowledgement of their significance may assist in developing an understanding of the motivations driving the implementation of the project. RFW hopes that by rebranding Wythenshawe as a garden city for the 21st century and by changing the way Wythenshawe is portrayed in the media and perceived by its residents, it will be viewed as a more desirable place to live. They also hope to effect substantial behavioural change within Wythenshawe through encouraging residents to grow their own food and to cook from scratch. The levels of apathy within the community and its underlying causes cannot be ignored when considering a project that seeks to engage and excite people. In this respect,

the ways in which the project staff members seek to engage and communicate with their target audience are key considerations and are discussed in the following sections.

4.3.5. Creating and communicating an effective message from the top-down

This section explores the ways in which RFW has sought to reach and engage with Wythenshawe residents and considers how the project coordinators would like the project to be perceived by others. In order to reach the largest possible number of people in Wythenshawe, the communications aspect of the project's funding proposal was initially allocated a substantial resource, with a dedicated creative communications agency responsible for the work. As one of the authors of the bid document stated, it was "almost like the sixth flagship project":

"In the original bid, the plan was that communications would be a much more substantial part of the whole programme and rather than it just being communications to promote what was going on, there was quite a lot of specific outcomes attached to the communications, which was all about behavioural change... across the whole of Wythenshawe."

(Fiona, interview, July 2015)

Fiona spoke of the initially extensive plans for RFW communications, including a "pledge campaign" targeted at several thousands of people encouraging and monitoring behavioural change, and noted that in order to have an "impact over the 70,000 people that live in Wythenshawe, you need a certain level of investment" (Fiona, interview, July 2015).

In the early stages of project delivery, the association with the communications agency came to an end as the wider partnership "just didn't feel that it was tenable to be investing such a high amount of money in communications" (Fiona, interview, July 2015). Jacqueline, the RFW project manager, felt that the original plans for communications were "quite unusual" and "didn't fit the project in some ways" (Jacqueline, interview, November 2015). Having previously worked for Manchester City Council, she admitted she was familiar with having to work in "money-strapped situation[s]" explaining that this was part of the reason

that she was prepared to be “resourceful around comms” (Jacqueline, interview, November 2015). Rather than spending the proposed proportion of the budget on communications through the partnering communications agency, the team decided that publicity and engagement could be accomplished by the RFW team and by the WCHG in-house communications team.

“We’ve worked in-house with the comms team that are here that have worked really hard on our behalf and they’ve got great ways of getting to the right people, the local papers, local periodicals, we’re pretty good at getting stuff on Facebook and Twitter... The other way is by talking to people... because word of mouth is a great thing.”

(Jacqueline, interview, November 2015)

Following the departure of the communications agency as a project partner, the resulting communications effort was conducted at a much smaller scale, with resources taken out of communications and channelled into the delivery of the project. As Fiona noted, the communications strategy “moved over to being just about a kind of reporting mechanism”, adding that “putting something in the housing trust magazine for information is very different to something that is actually going to start changing hearts and minds” (Fiona, interview, July 2015). Rachel accepted that the RFW team had taken the responsibility for communications on “as extra” (Rachel, focus group, November 2015) and acknowledged that the WCHG communications department did not have the capacity to carry out a comprehensive communications programme for the project.

Observations in Wythenshawe suggested that the team’s technique of promoting the project’s activities through social media invited criticism for its narrow reach, with observers commenting that events seemed to attract people who were often already familiar with the project. Daphne, who also regrets the lack of effective communications for the project, stated that the photographs and updates on the RFW Facebook page frequently feature pictures of the project staff rather than engaged residents (for example, see Figure 12):

“Even the publicity that exists, it's not really fostering this notion of, "Ooh, that looks interesting", or "Ooh that's so and so, she lives just down the street from me. Well maybe I could get involved in it". It's a bunch of people all wearing this RFW t-shirt and, and they crop up over and over again... I can remember when all the discussions were going on about the amount of money in the budget for communications and the housing trust saying "Oh you know, we can do a lot of this stuff in-house". Um, well, it doesn't look like it's been massively successful.”

(Daphne, interview, August 2015)



Figure 12. The Real Food Wythenshawe team at the Dig the City exhibition (Real Food Wythenshawe, 2015a)

The project funding bid aimed to have “1500 Facebook fans enlisted within the five years” and, currently halfway through their fourth year, the RFW Facebook page has 444 followers (Real Food Wythenshawe, 2012b, p. 54). Counter to the idea that their social media communications campaign lacked reach, Jacqueline felt that the team has been successful

in promoting the project through their own publicity campaigns in a more cost-effective way than originally planned, claiming that the team is “pretty good at getting [the message] out there and you’ve always got to have some kind of novelty factor to attract people” (Jacqueline, interview, November 2015). In this respect, the team members prided themselves on their creativity, using “gimmicky” campaigns such as an initiative to encourage a higher fibre diet called “Poetry in Motion” and an edible Christmas card made from rice paper that reads, “Don’t waste food this Christmas. Use only what you need. Eat after reading.” Jacqueline added that “it’s just to make people laugh”, suggesting that these methods of engagement were designed to entertain the public in order to stimulate initial engagement rather than to encourage a deeper level of pro-environmental behavioural change (Jacqueline, interview, November 2015).

A source of disagreement among those involved with RFW was the extent to which the project should restrict itself to activities within the Wythenshawe community. In order to communicate their message, the RFW team focused on “flying the flag” for Wythenshawe and engaging in a rebranding exercise whereby Wythenshawe was no longer viewed primarily as a place of deprivation and where residents could effectively be gifted a sense of pride in their surrounding environment:

“It’s just trying to establish that idea into people’s mind that Wythenshawe is a green part of the City... We’re trying to get back to this idea of Wythenshawe being a garden city for the 21st century.”

(Jacqueline, focus group, November 2015)

In attempting to achieve this, the RFW team visited external events including Dig the City, a festival where various organisations design and exhibit show gardens in the Centre of Manchester; and the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Flower Show in Tatton Park, an area of Cheshire, south of Wythenshawe. Although the team members viewed the events as a positive means of promoting Wythenshawe, their enthusiasm for the two events was not ubiquitous. One bid author expressed disbelief at the decision to use time and resources to engage with people in other areas during the growing season, particularly when this

meant that they were unavailable for activities and engagement within Wythenshawe. She recalled a time a colleague attempted to organise a meeting with the team, stating that:

“[RFW] said, “We’re out of the office for the next three weeks”. They were all at Tatton, then at Dig the City and then at the Wythenshawe Games. Now, for a growing coordinator, being away from all those groups at such a crucial time of the year, frankly, it’s nuts... How is that progressing this work? And who on earth within the management structure has said it’s okay for them *all* to be out doing something, which effectively just seems to be about general promotion of the project?”

(Daphne, interview, August 2015)

When justifying the decision to attend the external events, the team cited the benefits of heightened publicity and spoke of the new contacts they had established as a result, with Pam adding that, “Our own comms team said they could not have bought that amount of coverage, so that was invaluable... It’s also the connections we’ve made through doing those events... like Louis from the Great British Bake Off. By getting to know him, he was tweeting about Real Food, so it’s actually getting even further afield about what we’re doing in Wythenshawe” (Pam, focus group, November 2015). Rachel acknowledged the familiarity of the criticism confirming that, “it doesn’t come out of Real Food’s budget... It’s just time that we’re spending on it”, although crucially, one could argue that staff salaries and therefore their time is financed through the project. Daphne’s criticisms surrounding RFW’s attendance of Dig the City included concerns regarding the types of engagement within the events, questioning the suitability of the group’s activities in the context of the aims of the project (see Figure 13):

“It’s about communities living sustainably and trying to build the community locally... And what were they doing? They were using a Nutri Bullet and making green cocktails. Now how many people in Wythenshawe are going to be able to go out and buy a Nutri Bullet? ...There’s a lot of people in Wythenshawe that can’t even afford to run a cooker! You know, honestly, it feels to me like they’ve completely lost their way.”



Figure 13. Bar area of the RFW Dig the City garden

Another rationale for attending Dig the City from the perspective of the RFW staff members was that “It also gives people in Wythenshawe something to be proud of; it’s something to talk to your family about” (Rachel, focus group, November 2015). Interviews revealed that project participants and volunteers were generally unsure as to the value of the time spent at external events, with one volunteer describing the process as “disheartening” (Dean, interview, October 2015). This crucial perspective is drawn out and discussed further in Chapter 6 (section 6.4), where the experiences and perceptions of the volunteers are considered in more detail. For now, the focus will remain with the perspectives of those responsible for the design and implementation of the project.

RFW was originally intended to support grassroots initiatives in order to encourage collaborative transformation from the ground-up; however, due to the structure of the partnership and the way in which the project was managed, an alternative orientation was adopted. Daphne viewed the external promotion of the project as unnecessary, believing that the provision of support to existing initiatives and allowing communities to thrive from within would be more effective:

“One of the benefits of that, would be people from outside Wythenshawe would start to see Wythenshawe in a different way. [For example] “Oh, there’s this fantastic artisan bakery in Wythenshawe”, or, “Have you tasted that gooseberry jam [a Wythenshawe resident] made? I buy it from the hospital farmers’ market. It’s absolutely fantastic”. So there is a knock-on effect. You just don’t need to take your whole staff team out of the area you’re supposed to be working in for three weeks in order to achieve that.”

(Daphne, interview, August 2015)

The team also attended the Tatton Flower Show, leading a cooking demonstration session and displaying a garden built in partnership with Reaseheath College in Nantwich, Cheshire. Following their time at the show, the display garden was transported back from Tatton and gifted to Wythenshawe Park, with the intention that RFW volunteers could take responsibility for its maintenance and care, something which is also discussed from the perspective of the project volunteers in Chapter 6. As with Dig the City, the team felt that attendance in Tatton would widen the appeal of Wythenshawe as a place and raise awareness of the project. As Pam noted:

“That was a really good project. But the reason that I wanted to go was... to show those people actually what is being done in Wythenshawe... to get across that positive note, that Wythenshawe is changing... to engage with those people... and also look at hopefully bringing them into the geodome, the edible interchange, Wythenshawe Farm. So bring those people on the perimeter actually into Wythenshawe.”

(Pam, focus group, November 2015)

The team shared Pam’s perspective and agreed that visiting external events such as Dig the City and the Tatton show were ways in which RFW would “change perceptions”. Jacqueline offered the example of the project featuring on national news and Gardeners’ Question Time as a result of Tatton, adding, “We had more publicity about the project on that than we could ever have imagined... [It’s important] that we go out there and fly the flag for

Wythenshawe. Because what's the point of us doing this if we only sell this idea to people in Wythenshawe? It just doesn't work!" (Jacqueline, focus group, November 2015). Daphne resisted the idea that "going out of Wythenshawe" to publicise the project was necessary, adding:

"You have to ask the question: People in Wythenshawe that see those kinds of things, what message does that give them about the work that's happening in Wythenshawe? How does it make them feel like they can connect with it? Because Tatton Flower Show isn't something that most people in Wythenshawe would connect with, necessarily. It's incredibly expensive to get in."

(Daphne, interview, August 2015)

During observations at WCHG and Wythenshawe Farm, it was clear that the RFW team was careful to evoke a sense of professionalism and credibility for the project. This was a deliberate attempt to distance the project from what Rachel referred to as the growing group "stereotype" of "organic, dreadlocks"; an image that she believed would "put a lot of people off". She added, "You need to work out what's going to persuade the population that you're working with" (Rachel, interview, November 2015). During an interview with Serena, the previous growing coordinator, she reflected that she did not feel that she fit in during her time in the role, suggesting that the RFW team would prefer "someone that's a bit more corporate friendly, maybe a bit smarter". She added:

"I come in a bit scruffy sometimes because I'm not really as polished as the rest of them. I do often feel seriously like I'm a different image to what they are, what the housing group or whatever want to represent. They do pick who they have on the front of their brochures and who they have at certain events and who they have talking on the radio and all the rest of it and it's never been me... I've often felt a bit "why am I not being listened to? Why am I so different to them?"

(Serena, interview, July 2014)

Jacqueline viewed the image and status of the project as significant considerations when attempting to increase volunteer numbers. Believing that participants are more likely to become a part of a project that they perceive to be well respected, the team aimed to inspire involvement by creating a high profile status:

“Many years ago I worked as a volunteer for a project that had a really high profile and it was really prestigious to be a volunteer. So that was the way that I wanted to try and get people to think about Real Food, that it’s prestigious to become a volunteer and it’s something that you really want to do, because it’s great for your C.V., because people would say, “Oh, you’ve been a Real Food volunteer”.”

(Jacqueline, interview, November 2015)

Attempting to increase participation and broaden the project’s reach was also important for a number of staff members who reflected on their experience of community food initiatives being guilty of attracting people who are in a stable financial position and can afford the luxury of spending time on a pastime such as food growing. Serena, who has since left the project, commented that the divide between these “usual suspects” and the people in Wythenshawe who may be genuinely struggling to provide and prepare fresh produce for themselves and their families could be problematic for a project that seeks to reach the latter:

“A lot of people involved in these movements are very middle class... and sometimes there’s a bit of a barrier between the people coordinating those types of projects and the reality on the ground. And the reality on the ground is a lot of people in Wythenshawe are very poor, or they only have a certain amount of time to talk to you about things that are really quite difficult concepts.”

(Serena, interview, July 2014)

This observation was echoed by Jacqueline, who agreed that “a lot of the projects around growing tend to be... really middle class, exclusive activities”, believing that “if you get

working-class people to embrace this and take on board those things for themselves, you can really change things” (Jacqueline, focus group, November 2015). The observation that community agriculture projects tend to be dominated by white, middle-class people has been made by Alkon and Agyeman (2011), who observe that societal privilege is often afforded to those who have the time and resources to engage in these types of activities. The need to reach beyond the “usual suspects” of UA projects also brought the geographically exclusive nature of the project funding under scrutiny. Wythenshawe had been chosen as a place worthy of investment, in part, due to its high levels of deprivation. The team was aware that it would be relatively unchallenging to stimulate interest in other areas, but agreed that their focus should ideally remain within Wythenshawe. Kay noted that she has “been approached by lots of groups that are from outside [Wythenshawe]... That’s a difficult one because the project is quite specific in that sense... It’s supposed to be for Wythenshawe”. The team was concerned that if they opened the project to people living in surrounding areas, “it soon could become hijacked by lots of people who don’t particularly need it in the same way... It’s very easy to go to Chorlton and hang outside the Barbican and get busloads of people because they’re already on board... but this is not that project. This project is about getting those difficult people.” (Kay, focus group, November 2015).

During interviews, staff members emphasised the importance of creating a message that would be appealing to their target audience, even if this did not have environmental sustainability or local, fresh food as a central feature. The coordinators have accepted that although the project aims to encourage pro-environmental behaviour within Wythenshawe, interest in issues surrounding sustainability or healthy eating is not universal. Their approach has been to try to create an appealing message based on their perception of issues that resonate with their target audience, using food as an educational tool. As Susan, the project administrator observed:

“Some people, sadly, will not be really interested in eating healthier, but they would be interested in saving some money. So you can show them how to save some money on their food bill.”

(Susan, focus group, November 2015)

Rachel, the education coordinator, admitted that she is “not an environmental expert”, but suspected that her lack of expertise “actually engages people more” as it allows for a more empathetic learning experience (Rachel, interview, November 2015). Rachel also believed that methods of engagement should take into account a consideration of the interests of the person involved rather than simply focusing on the more general benefits of growing:

“I did a presentation the other day to media students and [I thought] “how are they going to benefit from growing food?”... “what’s going to interest them?”... So we were talking about film, we were talking about marketing, we were talking about time-lapse cameras and speeding up the growing of something. That would be how they engage with the geodome. So it doesn’t necessarily need to be the growing, but it has to be of interest to that person.”

(Rachel, interview, November 2015)

When discussing techniques to stimulate public interest in the project, Jacqueline supported Rachel’s view noting that the team had to be “quite good at psychology” in order to avoid “putting people off” (Jacqueline, focus group, November 2015). The project coordinators believed that it was important to carry out activities in a way that was “non-judgemental” and “inclusive of everybody” (Jacqueline, focus group, November 2015). Kay spoke of the need to “get people through the door” on their own terms and to be willing to encourage involvement by “persuading people on a social engagement level” (Kay, focus group, November 2015). She also emphasised the importance of encouraging “very small steps” to grow an enthusiasm for food and to appreciate its value:

“So if you just have a hanging basket with some lettuce in, if you just have a little pot with some herbs in, that’s success, and that’s the beginning. Because I think if they have success in their own growing, that’s when something else might come. They might go “I’m putting one of those big bags of potatoes in this year.””

(Kay, interview, January 2016)

Through this approach, it seems that the team members began to appreciate the scale of their challenge and to value small changes in behaviour in associated individuals through their involvement with the project. These adjustments in expectations have been necessary as the project coordinators have learnt that it is sometimes appropriate to make compromises and meet people halfway. This is discussed further in the following section.

4.3.6. Making compromises

The project staff discussed the need to adjust expectations and make concessions in order to reach their target audience. For Serena, her background in grassroots growing initiatives and sustainability had influenced her opinions on issues such as appropriate levels of engagement with supermarkets and the promotion of organic growing methods. She felt that she had a good understanding of the holistic nature of the project design and the manner in which the authors intended for the project to be delivered:

“My own values versus the actual project have been a bit of a conflict because I grow my own, I do everything organically... and I think politically and economically about the decisions I make. And I’ve had to realise that, although [the project is] written very much in that style, the people that wrote the bid obviously come from that background as well and understand those concepts.”

(Serena, interview, July 2014)

The reality of delivering the project led Serena to realise that adhering strictly to her values regarding sustainable food may not always be possible, and would often be at odds with the beliefs of other staff members who were from contrasting backgrounds. This can be illustrated by the project coordinators’ opinions on the problematic nature of promoting organic growing methods as part of the project. When asked about the benefits of encouraging organic growing with project participants, Kay, the growing coordinator responded that she has “nothing against organic”, but does not “promote it either” (Kay, interview, January 2016). Pam acknowledged that in the original project design, “the whole idea on the growing side was to get everybody growing organically” (Pam, focus group,

November 2015), however the staff all felt that this was not an agenda that they should pursue. The reasons for reservations from all staff members surrounded the idea that labelling a product or an activity as “organic” could be perceived by some as an unnecessary barrier for involvement. As Rachel explained:

“If you’re learning something completely new, if you start with how you want somebody to be at the very end, it’s too much to learn. There’s actually a lot of pitfalls with organic. You might not be able to grow as much, you might have a failure in your crop that stops you growing forever, because actually it’s too difficult. Whereas after five years of growing and it might not be completely organic, people start learning, start reading books, start talking to people, and you might progress to that at some point.”

(Rachel, focus group, November 2015)

Pam agreed, stating that asking a project participant to grow vegetables using organic methods is equivalent to expecting them to “run before they can walk”. She qualified this by recalling that in the early stages of the project, “getting people to actually recognise a vegetable to start with let alone grow it organically was going to be a huge ask” (Pam, focus group, November 2015). The team agreed that compromises were necessary and that stipulating that food grown as part of the project should be organic “might put people off all together”, adding that, “It’s all about meeting people halfway really and getting them to grow” (Kay, interview, January 2016).

Daphne recognised that there were assumptions in the funding bid about what was actually meant by ‘sustainable food’ and that on reflection, it would have been useful to have a discussion among the project coordinators and partners about how the project defines sustainability and sustainable food. For Serena and Daphne for instance, supermarkets have no place in a sustainable food system and the use of supermarkets should not be promoted:

“I picked up quite early on when Jacqueline was talking about doing various things with supermarkets and I kind of thought, “oh dear”... The supermarket

thing is something I feel very uncomfortable about. Because one of the reasons that Wythenshawe has very little in the way of any independent shopping and one of the reasons the market is on its last legs is because of the massive supermarkets there.”

(Daphne, interview, August 2015)

Serena, similarly was disappointed by the lack of focus on sourcing produce, particularly for the project’s cookery sessions:

“We’ve had to work a lot with supermarkets and to be honest with you, I am very anti working with supermarkets because of what they represent to the food sector. And because of the destruction that they cause on a bigger scale... I’ve studied the food sector. I’ve studied the politics of it... In my own life I can make decisions, but in my work life, it has caused some challenges and some conflicts with some of the work that we do because it’s not quite taken the route I would’ve liked.”

(Serena, interview, July 2014)

For the remaining project coordinators, who perhaps took a more pragmatic approach, working with supermarkets was a necessity. Pam stated that she is a “firm believer that supermarkets are always going to be there”, while Rachel related the issue of supermarkets to the team’s views on organic produce:

“It’s exactly the same but with supermarkets... Supermarkets exist, they are the place in Wythenshawe where people can get their fresh fruit and veg except for one markets stall. So as a project, we can’t boycott the supermarkets because there’s no alternative.”

(Rachel, interview, November 2015)

For Serena, it was also a question of “where the funding is going”. She questioned whether a project that was “talking about sustainability, local food [and] low carbon” should be

going to “massive corporations” to source the food for their programme, arguing that more focus could be placed on looking for more local alternatives (Serena, interview, July 2014):

“For example, I would’ve really liked to have formed... a more wholesome relationship with a grower within Cheshire, or perhaps somewhere like Glebelands in Sale, for supplying produce but also for doing volunteers sessions and getting the commercial growing side out there nice and early for people as an option. So I think I expected a bit more of that and I expected a bit more integrated work with the wider food sector in Manchester.”

(Serena, interview, July 2014)

The team’s association with local supermarkets ranged from sourcing food for activities and demonstrations, to promoting a local supermarket through a fibre awareness campaign (see Figure 14). The campaign, called “Poetry in Motion” encouraged Wythenshawe residents to consume a higher level of dietary fibre by giving out vouchers for a loaf of sliced bread and baked beans at a local supermarket. The supermarket was willing to provide vouchers as a means to increase footfall to their premises and the RFW team felt that they could use the vouchers as a tool through which conversations with local residents could be held regarding the importance of dietary fibre. Daphne commented that her “heart sank” when she saw the vouchers and associated postcard that has been produced by the project:

“Yeah, there might be some fibre in baked beans but they’re loaded with sugar... If anything, [they] should be handing out recipes showing people how they can make baked beans... It’s really straight forward and you can make them without using any sugar... For me they are so off message, it’s a little bit embarrassing. And so, for me personally, I’ve kind of had to let it go.”

(Daphne, interview, August 2015)



Figure 14. Sourcing project ingredients from local supermarkets

When asked about the suitability of a “Real Food” organisation promoting supermarket tinned beans and processed sliced bread to the resident population, Rachel responded with a level of surprise:

“Oh dear! Well yes, processed bread. If we could all make our own bread every day that would be very nice wouldn’t it?! [laughter] No, I think, getting somebody from white bread to brown bread is a massive achievement... White bread or waking up in the morning and having a packet of crisps for breakfast... You’ve got to think about the starting point people are at... There’s sugar in [beans]... but it’s a really healthy breakfast compared to no breakfast at all, really sugary cereal, energy drinks.”

(Rachel, interview, November 2015)

In an acceptance of the reality of working with the project, Serena admitted that she had reluctantly adjusted her expectations towards the end of her role:

“My perspectives have changed from thinking, “Oh, it’s not as organic or as local as I would’ve liked”... If you look at what’s on the doorstep of Wythenshawe, supermarkets are people’s place to go and they’re probably the best option compared to a corner shop, financially and also there’s a bit

more range... at least some stuff is seasonal. So I've had to really kind of cut down some of my expectations to a much more basic level."

(Serena, interview, July 2014)

Project coordinators with contrasting professional backgrounds had differing views over which aspects of the project to prioritise and all parties were required to make compromises at an early stage of the project. This initial period of establishment resulted in the dilution of the idealistic tone of the project design in terms of the focus on grassroots support within the community and the widespread production of organic, local and sustainably grown produce.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter began by providing a short history of the development of Wythenshawe in order to situate RFW in the context of its background as an interwar satellite town whose design was influenced by the garden city movement, but whose claim to the status of garden city was never secured. In considering the origins of the district as a well-meaning but in some ways misguided social intervention that lacked a real consideration of the needs and experiences of the people it sought to help, a narrative has been suggested as a way to consider some of the problems of deprivation experienced in contemporary Wythenshawe. Just as the lives of people in the early days of the estate were controlled and shaped by socioeconomic and political forces that surrounded them, so too are the lives and experiences of present-day residents of Wythenshawe.

The second half of this chapter introduced RFW as an intervention that aims to address some of the issues the district faces through a series of educational and skills-based activities in the area. Following a discussion of the challenges in Wythenshawe identified by the project staff, a summary of the project's aims and activities was offered and the motivations of the lead partner, WCHG, and project staff were explored. The chapter ended by discussing methods employed by the team to create and communicate an effective message and by reflecting on compromises the staff deemed as necessary to make during the course of the project. Early financial constraints and contrasting ideals

and opinions over the direction the project should take led to a loss of project partners, including the creative communications agency discussed and possibly contributed to the early departure of one member of staff. The resulting project developed in a manner that deviated from some of its original aims and enabled the team to adapt in response to the changing environment of Wythenshawe.

Here, an effort has been made to provide a narrative almost entirely from the perspective of the project designers and implementers. In revealing the motivations and expectations of the actors delivering the project from the top-down, it will be possible to consider the motivations and wishes of the participants and volunteers as a point of comparison later in the thesis (see Chapter 6). In a move away from the consideration of the motivations driving the implementation of RFW, the following section discusses the impacts and motivations of the volunteers and participants at two of the RFW growing sites: the Macmillan community garden and Wythenshawe Farm.

Chapter 5

Impact and Motivations from the Grassroots

5.1. Introduction

This chapter uses data collected during observations and interviews to explore both the motivations driving participation in growing activities and the resulting impacts of involvement at two study sites: the Macmillan community garden and Wythenshawe Farm. The key emergent themes from interview and focus group data are summarised in Table 6.

| | Macmillan Community Garden | Wythenshawe Farm |
|----------------------|--|---|
| Motivations | Autonomy of decision making | Helping others |
| | Charity/helping others | |
| | Socialising and mutual support | Socialising as a way to rebuild a sense of community |
| | No obligation to work | Learning to grow |
| Impacts | Growing skills | Gaining confidence in growing abilities |
| | Dietary impact (limited) | Dietary impact (limited) |
| | Produce exchanged for donations | |
| | Therapy | |
| Disincentives | Lack of secure tenure | Insufficient numbers of volunteers/infrequent and unstructured nature of sessions |
| | Poor information exchange between landowner, land users and intermediaries | A lack of autonomy |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | Levels of work involved in establishing growing site | Difficulty integrating with other growing groups and sharing space |
|--|--|--|

Table 6. Summary of de/motivating factors and impacts of growing activities for participants at two study sites: Macmillan community garden and Wythenshawe Farm

Continuing involvement from committed participants is a critical factor when considering the feasibility and sustainability of UA projects, particularly those that depend heavily on volunteers (Garnett, 2000). In order to more fully comprehend motives for sustained participation it is also necessary to explore the less appealing aspects of growing projects from participants' perspectives. Accordingly, this chapter begins by highlighting both the motivating factors and impacts experienced at the Macmillan community garden in sections 5.2 and 5.3, followed by a reflection of obstacles harbouring the potential to result in disengagement in section 5.4. The second half of the chapter addresses the same themes of motivations, impacts and disincentives by drawing on interview data from the second study site, Wythenshawe Farm.

5.2. Macmillan community garden: Motivations for participation

This section begins by exploring the factors that motivated community gardeners at the Macmillan site to become and continue to be involved with growing activities. These included a level of autonomy in decision making, the desire to help others and to socialise, and a level of freedom to work as little or as much as each participant chose. While McClintock (2010, p. 1) argues that urban growing groups "arise in an attempt to subvert the industrial agri-food system", observations suggested that the Macmillan community garden members were not driven by political discontent and that their activities could be better described using the concept of DIY citizenship (Crossan et al., 2016) or quiet sustainability (Smith & Jehlička, 2013). This section is followed by a consideration of some of the impacts experienced at the site in section 5.3.

5.2.1. Autonomy of decision making

Although the Macmillan community garden was partly facilitated by RFW using WCHG land, the participants viewed the community garden as a Macmillan rather than a RFW endeavour. Observations and interviews demonstrated that not all of the members of the group were aware of RFW's early involvement and very few had a clear idea of the aims and activities of the wider project. This may be partly a result of the recruitment process for the group, which was carried out by Macmillan staff and volunteers, predominantly from the hospital rather than by RFW project staff. The situation was further compounded by a lack of opportunities for communication or information exchange with RFW, who rarely visited the site or contacted the group once it had been established.

"As far as RFW's concerned, we don't get to hear first-hand of their involvement... We do it for Macmillan but we do follow what we think are [RFW] guidelines as far as growing procedures and that."

(Daniel, focus group, July 2015)

This distance from RFW resulted in a level of autonomy that was not observed in the growing group at Wythenshawe Farm. The group members valued having the freedom to make choices regarding what to produce and how to arrange the plot. This observation supports Rosol (2012, p. 248)'s assertion that "self-determination" is an important factor for growing groups who often seek "minimal interference in the design and their way of running [their] lots", following from the hypothesis that community gardeners would be not be content to "work in a hierarchical project controlled and managed from the outside". Sharing space and working towards a common goal suited the participants well and everybody felt that they had agency in decision-making processes. The democratic nature of the group was clear throughout the research, with members consulting one another on every aspect of their endeavour; from the types of vegetables grown, to the location of the water supply and the colour of paint used for the shed. Holland (2004) observed that while many community gardens are born from the ideas and hopes of an individual, projects like the Macmillan community garden can only really achieve sustainability with continued and evolving participation from members.

5.2.2. Charity/helping others

The group members all agreed that while they benefited from their own involvement (see section 5.3. for impact) a large part of their motivation stemmed from a desire to promote the charity they were proud to support. As Daniel noted:

"...the people who are coming, apart from the core volunteers of us, who are working for Macmillan anyway, the others who come are people who are living with cancer. And Macmillan has supported them through that and so they naturally want to make sure that it carries on for others so that's why their allegiance is there. And they feel obviously quite strongly about it."

(Daniel, interview, September 2015)

John and Bob echoed Daniel's sentiments with Bob claiming that his desire to attend the growing sessions at the community garden was inspired by the support that he received from the Macmillan charity during a time of need, and John acknowledging that giving something back to the charity gave him a sense of purpose:

"Because it's Macmillan and at the end of the day you're going to produce something... you feel good about that and then it's going back to Macmillan so you're actually giving something back as well so you're getting something out of it."

(John, focus group, July 2015)

This highlights not only the members' commitment to the charity, but the satisfaction that they experienced through offering reciprocal support. Tony, who had not been affected directly by cancer, also felt strongly about doing what he could to help the charity following the illness of a relative:

"I do this really because I've had um, one of the family, step daughter, she had... cancer..., so I thought it would be a good thing to help people and the hospital and things like that."

(Tony, interview October, 2015)

The theme of a desire to support what was perceived to be a worthwhile cause ran through all of the interviews and observations at the site. The reasons for an individual's admiration of Macmillan varied from person to person, but the inclination to support it seemed ubiquitous. This observation is in line with research by Kneafsey et al. (2017, p. 624), who linked this type of motivation with the concept of quiet sustainability, arguing that these practices are often carried out with “joy, exuberance, generosity, care and skill”, and while they may have the effect of supplying food through channels other than the dominant food system, the motivations behind the actions are not necessarily deliberately subversive, but may instead be “unintentionally aligned with food justice movements”.

5.2.3. Socialising and mutual support

From early visits to the site, it was clear that the social aspects of the growing group were as important as the growing itself. Matthew noted that the group members would attend the sessions regardless of success rates or productivity levels.

“If nothing grew, we would still be here, trying to make it grow I'm sure. You know so, no, I think it does matter yes, because you like to see the fruits of your labours and what not. But, it's just nice to be here.”

(Matthew, interview, October 2015)

The sessions provided an opportunity for people to be in the company of others who were experiencing or had experienced a similar illness and the freedom to share their experiences. For John, Thursday mornings acted as a valuable chance to socialise with the group, as Graham, the group coordinator observed:

"And you can see with John now..., he's going to go through hell, he's been through hell but he's gotta go through hell again, and he's going to make sure he comes down for a cup of tea. He says, "I will not miss coming down". Again, because he can talk to the group rather than the family."

(Graham, interview, August 2015)

The supportive environment that encouraged participants to attend the sessions was enhanced by a jovial atmosphere that had developed at the site and was enjoyed by the group members, with Matthew stating that “the craic that we get here is, you know. It’s men jibbing with men really. It’s good fun, a bit of relaxation” (Matthew, interview, October 2015).

During observations at the community garden, the members were clearly determined that their growing sessions should above all, be enjoyable. Sessions always began with a cup of tea around a table and discussions were free flowing covering a multitude of topics including plans for the garden, the weather, social excursions, experiences during hospital stays, and current affairs. Whatever the topic of conversation, it was never long before jokes and gentle ribbing made an appearance (see Figure 15). Rosol (2012, p. 247) identified “having fun” as “the factor that predominates and combines all other motives for the commitment of the community gardeners” and this certainly seemed to be an important consideration for the Macmillan community gardeners.



Figure 15. Macmillan community garden members on a tea break

Tony and Jarred, who live close to the site, were frequently mentioned when members discussed social impact. Although neighbours, they did not interact with one another before their involvement with the community garden and Tony had felt socially isolated for a number of years. Tony admitted that the weekly sessions allow him to "get to know what's going on in the world", and as Graham recalled:

"I used to see this fella, there at this gate, smoking away and looking at me. And I just carried on week on week and I thought, who is he? Then I happened to wave to him, he opened his gate and it's Tony... and that's it. He's been here ever since. Again, it does him the world of good..."

(Graham, interview, August 2015)

The same was often said of Jarred, who enjoyed socialising with the other participants and became a valued member of the group:

"...you can see the change in Jarred now. He's come out of himself... you can see how sociable he is now... that's what this has done."

(Graham, interview, August 2015)

The social benefits of involvement with community gardens has been documented in a number of studies (Alaimo, Reischl, & Allen, 2010; Wakefield, Yeudall, Taron, Reynolds, & Skinner, 2007) and this aspect of the growing sessions held great importance for the participants who valued the opportunity to meet, have discussions, joke and relax. Furthermore, this observation supports Holland (2004)'s assertion that one of the strengths of community gardens is that their benefits are diverse, and are not restricted to the food growing itself. This "multiplicity", Holland (2004, p. 303) argues is significant in that it provides "value for money" when a number of outcomes can be accomplished through one activity.

5.2.4. No obligation to work

It was important to the group organisers that participants did not feel obliged to work. This is a particularly significant consideration in light of the fact that a number of the participants were experiencing a state of compromised health and did not always have the energy for heavy labour. As Daniel explained, this was achieved by ensuring that volunteers who were not affected by cancer were in regular attendance at the community garden:

"...we are there to make sure that the allotment carries on, you know the work carries on, whether anybody else comes or not so that people don't feel an obligation if they don't feel well enough to come for instance."

(Daniel, interview, September 2015)

Graham was clearly pleased that the group members felt at ease and did not feel the need to push themselves more than they felt they could:

"As you see we start off now on a Thursday morning. Everybody sits round having a cup of tea... Then slowly but surely we get up and do a bit. That depends on some of them physically are struggling. Um and then, Tony will say "everybody have a brew". Then everybody comes back to the table. And that's the way it should be. It's not here for graft."

(Graham, interview, August 2015)

Members of the group were vocal in their appreciation for Graham's insistence that there was no need engage in physical activity beyond their comfort zone:

"Well, Graham's attitude, to my mind when they first came, said, "You don't have to do anything. Just come through the gates, sit down, have a brew and a chat." "If you want to pull a few weeds, pull a few weeds. If you don't, nobody's going to hold it against you". It's a good philosophy, it's worked. I think it's worked."

(Matthew, interview, October 2015)

These observations are in line with those of Glover, Parry, & Shinew (2005, pp. 450, 460), who stress the importance of “leisure episodes” and reflect on the appeal of a more relaxed approach where community gardening is “not all work” but provides spaces for people to socialise and have fun.

5.3. Impacts of growing at the Macmillan community garden

The impacts of participation at the Macmillan community garden were varied and wide-ranging. These included increased access to fresh, local produce in the form of a vegetable stall at the local hospital; the development of growing knowledge and skills; a small impact on dietary behaviour in terms of a preference for home-grown vegetables over shop-bought; and the therapeutic effects of growing. These impacts are discussed in turn in the following three subsections.

5.3.1. Produce exchanged for donations at a hospital vegetable stall

Most vegetables grown at the site were taken to the local hospital in exchange for donations for the Macmillan charity and for maintenance of the plot. The group decided what to grow based on the types of vegetables people would ordinarily like to buy, with Daniel commenting that in order to “provide the centre with things that people will give a good donation for, then you need to grow the things that they want to take away” (Daniel, interview, September 2015). While the group focused on producing vegetables for the hospital stall, they found that people were occasionally unwilling to try unfamiliar vegetables, such as purple sprouting broccoli. In an acceptance of this reluctance, Daniel explained that the group tries to “get a balance so that [they] produce some things that are a bit more unusual, but still retaining good quantities of vegetables that people recognise and want to eat” (Daniel, interview, September 2015).

The majority of customers were hospital staff, who quickly became used to the regularity of the stall. Prices were not fixed and people could pay whatever they chose for the vegetables, as group member Bob explained:

"...some people just walk up, pick up a lettuce or whatever they want and just walk away and don't put a donation down and... that's ok. Quite a few actually walk up and donate more than the plants are actually worth."

(Bob, interview, August 2015)

This setup was fitting with some of the ideals behind the original RFW project design. Daphne, one of the funding bid authors spoke of the need to recognise "what a challenge it is for a lot of people in Wythenshawe to actually make ends meet" and the importance of linking this to people's ability to access "healthy, affordable, nutritious food" through alternative types of exchange such as bartering or swapping (Daphne, interview, August 2015). This approach could be compared to the "sliding scale food stand" described by McClintock (2014) illustrating the attempted decommodification of food by viewing it as a beneficial entity rather than a profitable asset. McClintock (2014, p. 148) states that "projects such as these arise in an attempt to subvert the industrial agri-food system", and while this is the driving force behind a number of radical UA projects, it seems unlikely that this was a major motivation for the Macmillan growers. Instead, members sought to help others, driven by compassion and empathy rather than an explicit rejection of the geopolitics of commercial food production. Observations demonstrated that the members of the growing group were proud of the vegetables they produced and were motivated by the idea that the activities at the site enabled them to give something back to Macmillan. This could instead be viewed as a demonstration of DIY citizenship, introduced in the Chapter 2 and described by Crossan et al. (2016, p. 5) as "a form of citizenship that is generative of collaborative social relations and new urban places, while also being disruptive, in unsettling neoliberalism's penchant for atomized individuals and reversing its frequently wasteful spatial practices."

The group's activities increased the availability of fresh, local produce in Wythenshawe but did not directly increase access to fruit and vegetables for residents of the area of particularly high deprivation in which the activities took place. Although the idea of holding a vegetable stall for local residents was discussed, it did not come to fruition, as the group did not wish to create a demand that they could not guarantee to meet on a regular basis.

5.3.2. Growing knowledge and dietary impact

As discussed above, the work of the Macmillan growing group contributed to an increased availability of fresh food by supplying fruit and vegetables to the local hospital for consumption by the public. This benefited not only the people at the hospital, who could buy the produce for as much or as little as they liked, but the Macmillan charity and the group itself. Access to fruit and vegetables also increased on a smaller scale within people's homes. As members learnt how to grow fruit and vegetables, they harnessed the skills they gained at the community garden and used them in their own gardens. As Daniel pointed out, this was one of the intended consequences of growing together:

"If you're growing something at home and something goes wrong or you're not sure about something you can bring it up with us here and we can share the ideas and then you can go away and do it and see how it turns out."

(Daniel, focus group, July 2015)

As a result of his time spent at the community garden, John purchased a raised bed for his garden at home, while Bob felt that his involvement with the group gave him the confidence to use his newly acquired skills to grow his own food. The growing activity reached further than the participants' own homes and Bob shared his garden vegetables with a next-door neighbour and a family across the road. He explained that giving his neighbours salad vegetables from his garden "saves them cash but also it develops a really good relationship with them" (Bob, interview, August 2015). Bob's resulting enthusiasm spread to three or four otherwise unconnected people in his local area, and it is possible that this had a wider effect if the interest in growing was dispersed further. This demonstrates the "ripple" effects of UA projects that can extend further than is immediately visible (Westphal, 2003, p. 138). These external impacts would be challenging for a project such as RFW to monitor and report, as they take place away from the site of research and become apparent only through sustained interaction with participants of the group.

While the association between an increased intake of fruit and vegetables and community gardening has been made previously (see for instance: Alaimo, Packnett, Miles, & Kruger, 2008), most participants did not feel that their experience at the community garden affected the types of food they consumed. Observations and informal interviews suggested that the majority of the group members already had access to fresh fruit and vegetables and did not struggle to provide themselves with a healthy, balanced diet, however the practice of growing vegetables influenced participants' preference for home-grown vegetables rather than shop-bought, where possible. This was predominantly due to the difference in taste:

"Yeah, it is definitely the flavour. It's the taste. It's totally different if you go into a shop and buy vegetables 'cause... they taste sweeter when you actually grow them."

(Tony, focus group, July 2015)

"I grew a cucumber last year. I didn't know what a cucumber should taste like until last year and we had to buy one this week because they [weren't ready]. They're absolutely tasteless and full of water, and the difference is unbelievable."

(Bob, focus group, July 2015)

Similar to the way that the group could be seen to be subverting the dominant food system by exchanging food for donations at the hospital stall, they also chose not to buy certain vegetables from supermarkets where they felt they have the opportunity to grow them instead. This was not in protest, nor did they seek to boycott supermarkets, it was a choice based on preference and taste with the unintentional effect of the appearance of subversion, a quiet act of sustainability.

While Tony enjoyed eating the vegetables that he grew himself, he found that his children were more difficult to convince, stating that "because I grew it, they won't eat it... They say, "Oh no, I'm not eating that. Slugs have been round it!" (Tony, interview, October 2015). The revulsion inspired by home-grown food may seem surprising, but given that our

food system is predisposed to present food that is clean in its appearance, uniform in shape and has no visible connection with its place of production, it follows that people may be deterred by an honestly presented vegetable. It is this disconnection that UA seeks to mend by bringing production closer to the consumer, however the example of Tony's children suggests that it may take some time to normalise the rustic appearance of home-grown vegetables and to recondition the populace to expect muddy or wonky vegetables as standard.

5.3.3. The therapy of watching plants grow and the manipulation of nature

A significant consideration for the group organisers was the provision of help and support for recent cancer patients during their recovery process. An informal interview with a member of staff at the Macmillan Centre in Wythenshawe Hospital confirmed the centre's determination to provide as many different ways of assisting people through their experiences as possible. The member of staff described people who have recently undergone chemotherapy or radiotherapy as feeling as though "they've been thrown out of a cement mixer". For John, a member of the community garden, it was clear that he valued the time he spent at the site every Thursday:

"The best thing about the site for me, I just see it as a kind of therapy... takes you away from your problems really... Because, if you're thinking about your illness all the time, it just consumes you. That's why I've seen this as, it's an outlet, only for a couple of hours a week, but it's definitely an outlet... It's therapy. Watching things grow."

(John, interview, July 2015)

The therapeutic effects of the community garden were raised during a number of interviews. The concept of therapeutic landscapes is well-established (Gesler, 1993; Pitt, 2014) and as Battersby and Marshak (2013, p. 451) note, there is a growing body of literature on the benefits of green space for areas such as stress reduction and wellbeing that they term "horticulture therapy" (see, for example Grahn & Stigsdotter, 2003). Unruh, Smith, and Scammell (2000, p. 7) use the concept of "Attention Restoration" in their

analysis of gardening activities among people who suffer from cancer. The theory comprises four main characteristics: "fascination", where a participant is compelled to give the task at hand their whole attention; "being away", the feeling of being removed from otherwise stressful thoughts or environments; "extent", the capacity of the gardening environment to draw people in through its richness; and "compatibility", the way in which the participant fits into the surroundings and the appropriateness of the tasks. All of these characteristics were visible in the Macmillan community garden with the concept of "being away" neatly capturing John's feelings regarding his visits to the site.

A recurrent theme throughout the interviews was the enjoyment the group members derived from seeing the plants grow, being 'fascinated' by their progress, feeling responsible for them and having a sense of control over them.

"I think what people get really is watching a plant going from small to massive, and I mean I get the hit on that. You know I mean I enjoy that and I can see them and look forward to it."

(Tony, focus group, July 2015)

"It's a sense of thinking well I did that. I've made that happen. You sort of become attached to them, and you know, you kind of feel in control of them."

(Daniel, focus group, July 2015)

The reflection of human-nature relations in gardening is not new (see, for example Bhatti & Church, 2001) and in a project that explored gardening as an activity conducted by people with long-term illnesses, Unruh et al. (2000) demonstrated that the subjects of their study who have been affected by cancer considered the human interaction with nature that gardening allows an important motivating factor. As Battersby and Marshak (2013, p. 451) observe, the research on horticulture therapy investigates the way in which gardening "can enforce a self-worth and appeal to the human spirit as well as benefit people's health". Furthermore, Sempik, Aldridge, and Becker (2005)'s detailed study of 'Therapeutic Horticulture in the UK' discusses the benefit of access to 'nature, freedom and space' and highlights the escapism that can be felt through experience of the outdoors. The

experience of the Macmillan community garden offered some group members a moment of calm and a temporary escape from the stresses of their experiences, while for others, it had the effect of increasing self-confidence enabling participants to emerge from relative isolation and to socialise within the group.

5.4. Macmillan community garden: Disincentives for participation

The major obstacles for participants at the Macmillan community garden were largely related to the precarious nature of temporary land use. The following section raises questions over the suitability of meanwhile sites for community gardening and highlights some of the aspects of temporary spaces that can detract from participants' enjoyment of the site. Furthermore, the barriers encountered as a result of the precarious nature of temporary spaces allow consideration of the conflict between *use* and *exchange* value when considering decisions regarding land use and involving land users.

5.4.1. Temporary spaces: Lack of secure tenure and the tacit assumption of permanence

In summer 2016, WCHG notified the group of their plans to develop the plot into housing in 2017 and the group decided to cease growing activities rather than relocate to another site. Through repeated site visits and extended conversations with group members, it seemed that although the group members were aware they would not have indefinite use of the land, they did not consciously expect the housing group to claim it back. In conversation, statements regarding the future development of the site were frequently formed using “if” rather than “when”, permanent features such as fruit trees became part of the landscape, and plans for the coming months and years were discussed. The time and effort invested in the space were indicative of the emotional attachment that the group members had formed to the garden:

“I think it's just the right size and it's got the right amenities on it. We've improved the amenities, that's why I got my table and the big umbrella... Obviously I think we'd be devastated if they took it away from us.”

(John, interview, July 2015)

"Well if they build on it, it'll be a disaster really I think. If you're going to build, then build somewhere else. That's my opinion."

(Tony, interview, August 2015)

Another indication that the group had not fully embraced the temporary nature of the site was their preference to grow in the ground rather than in raised beds or temporary containers. When asked about the possibility of growing in mobile containers such as skips, Tony, a group member and local resident responded with disbelief:

"Grow it in skips?!... God, can you imagine how many skips? How many plots have we got here? [counts to ten] You want about ten big skips... It would cost you more to put the soil in them...And then you've got to lift them. And move them to the sites... Not a good idea, no."

(Tony, interview, August 2015)

Tony's rationale for rejecting of the idea of growing in mobile containers was not limited to the practical difficulties specifically presented by skips. His disapproval extended to the entire concept of growing in alternative containers, viewing growing in the ground as a more traditional approach:

"You can't take away the old-fashioned way. This is the old-fashioned way to grow things... You take that away, it defeats the interest. Gone."

(Tony, interview, August 2015)

Group members also reflected that if the site were to move, it would affect Jarred and Tony most acutely, as they would struggle to travel the distance to a new location. As Matthew notes:

"If [the site is] moved, I don't know what Tony would do to be honest with you. It would be very difficult... I think it would really hurt Tony."

(Matthew, interview, October 2015)

One of the aims of RFW was to encourage Wythenshawe residents to grow their own food. Of the four group members who lived in Wythenshawe, two would have lacked the means to reach a new site had the group decided to relocate. Holland (2004) observed the importance of secure land tenure for the sustainability of a community garden, as uncertainty over the length of time the group has the use of the land may act as a barrier for its development and lead to a paucity of incentive for engagement.

5.4.2. Temporary spaces: Land users and landowners

Schmelzkopf (2002) notes the significance of both scale and value for decisions regarding land use, with varying contexts providing contrasting priorities (Smith & Kurtz, 2003). While space for gardening and socialising may be important for individuals at the grassroots, landowners may see more value in development. Observations at the Macmillan community garden demonstrated that given this mismatch in perceptions of use value and exchange value, effective communication between the two parties is crucial, with transparency in decision making being an important aspect of a fruitful relationship between land users, landowners and intermediaries. An element of distrust was instilled in the members of the Macmillan community garden in the early stages of the project, following the group's discovery that WCHG had already made plans to build on the site prior to the community garden's official opening ceremony:

"What they did in February last year was very naughty... We had it opened by [the local MP]. He opened it in the October. I saw the drawings and they were actually approved in the August... [The local MP] didn't know anything about it. If he was alive today he would've played merry hell."

(Graham, focus group, July 2015)

Following the latest notification that the land would be claimed back by WCHG in 2017, the group was evidently upset by the prospect of relinquishing the site but was also resigned to the idea that it belonged to the housing group and that they were powerless to stand in the way of development:

“You can't tell them what to do anyway, can you really? They're short of houses, they're gonna do it... and it's their land. So what can you do?”

(Tony, interview, October 2015)

The idea of entering a dialogue with WCHG in an attempt to keep the land or to extend their use of it did not feature in any of the interviews. As Ghose & Pettygrove (2014a, p. 93) note, in communities or networks, members with less status or “political clout” frequently find themselves complying with the wishes of actors who hold more power. This acceptance was perhaps strengthened by the decision of two key group members to relocate to other areas, making it unfeasible for them to travel to Wythenshawe to attend future growing sessions. The decision not to establish a new community garden at an alternative site was also influenced by the level of hard work that had been required to establish the community garden and the organiser's reluctance to repeat the process, which is discussed in the following section.

5.4.3. Temporary spaces: “A lot of hard work”

In recommending interstitial urban spaces for use as growing sites, it is tempting to imagine that areas of unused land can be transformed into productive gardens with minimal effort and expense. This was not the case with the Macmillan site, which was not garden-ready from the outset. The entire area needed to be cleared of rubbish, there was no water supply, no equipment, no shelter and the soil was untested and in poor condition. WCHG installed a water supply at a cost of approximately £3000 on behalf of RFW, who later provided a polytunnel for the site, aiming to increase yield and extend the growing season (see Figure 16). The group received external contributions of topsoil, wood chips, mulch and a corrugated iron container, used for storage and shelter and referred to by the group as their “MacDen”. As Daniel explained:

“When we came here at first the land was terrible because of what had gone before... The soil condition takes time to actually build up so if you're only here for say three years, you're just getting the soil into decent growing conditions and then you've got to give it all up to move somewhere else where the

chances are the land's going to be as bad as what you started with on the plot you just left. So then it's another three years to build it up. You know, and it goes on.”

(Daniel, focus group, July 2015)



Figure 16. The Macmillan community garden polytunnel

Although Graham, the group's organiser, was proud of the community garden's achievements, he had reservations about the prospect of starting another community garden elsewhere:

“If we do move from here, would I have the energy, would I have the push, knowing what's ahead of me to do it all again? This, I didn't know what was ahead of me. If I did, I'd probably say, oh god, that looks a lot of hard work. You know. What I've come through, that is a lot of hard work.”

(Graham, interview, August 2015)

5.4.4. Reflections from the group on the temporary nature of the site

Following the group's experience, all members agreed that they would not be interested in setting up another meanwhile growing site and offered the following advice for groups embarking on a similar project:

"Don't take on a temporary plot... Make sure that wherever you start up that it's your organisation that's doing it and you've got a long-term length of time to be there rather than being faced about 18 months into the project that you only have so much time left on it, which kills everybody's enthusiasm."

(Daniel, focus group, June 2016)

Daniel's suggestion that growing groups should secure land with the landowners directly rather than relying on a third party is a comment on the group's relationship with RFW. Through a series of disagreements earlier in the project, communications between RFW and individual members of the community garden became increasingly tense. On reflection, some group members considered their connection with RFW to have been a destructive influence, suggesting that, as Sadie and Bob put it in the final focus group, "the association with Macmillan" showed RFW in a beneficial light and they "only did it for what they could get out of it". Daniel shared the suspicion that the group had been set up in order to benefit RFW:

"We thought it was a genuine interest and actually on reflection it was possibly their kudos that they were interested in and we were just a tool that they could manipulate to get that."

(Daniel, focus group, June 2016)

The disappointment towards the end of the group's activities was palpable and John's comments in the final focus group regarding the site closure perhaps best sum up the sentiments expressed during later observations:

"I'm absolutely disgusted this place is shutting down... So we're all gutted. Gutted in the way it's going to go. We didn't deserve that."

(John, focus group, June 2016)



Figure 17. Initial stages of housing development on the site of the Macmillan community garden

5.5. Wythenshawe Farm: Motivations for participation

To follow on from reflections from the Macmillan community garden, this section explores motivations for participation in the growing sessions at Wythenshawe Farm. As with the community garden participants, volunteers at Wythenshawe Farm seemed motivated by a desire to help others through their growing activities and to socialise. Rather than being sessions where all group members gathered to grow vegetables in one space for a common, unchanging goal, the sessions were organised in a way that was more instructive and led by a growing coordinator in a variety of locations within the park, with the destination of the produce not always being clear to the participants. This orientation gave each individual member less agency in the decision-making processes, but did attempt to stimulate a more formal environment than the community garden, where people felt motivated to attend in order to learn how to grow. These factors are discussed in the

following subsections, followed by a consideration of impacts experienced at the site and a reflection of some of the barriers or disincentives for participation.

5.5.1. Helping others

Like the members of the Macmillan community garden, participants at the Wythenshawe Farm growing sessions seemed motivated by a desire to help others, whether it was improving the aesthetics of the surrounding park, assisting the group organiser or supplying the farm shop with vegetables. Through repeated visits to the farm it was clear that visitors and volunteers acknowledged that Wythenshawe Park had suffered from local authority budget and staff cuts in recent years. As a result, the remaining staff members were stretched to capacity and the park was heavily reliant on volunteers for general maintenance. Dean, a regular volunteer at the growing sessions stated that the reason he attended the growing sessions was to help in the park and "make it look nice for them" (Dean, interview, October 2015). The motivation to volunteer as a means of helping the local area was echoed by Andrew, a participant at the RFW growing sessions who was driven by a desire to help people who live locally by growing vegetables that could be supplied to local residents:

"It just interested me. Like, with being local. And, if you can do that and supply the people who haven't got what other people have..., then, that makes me happy."

(Andrew, interview, August, 2015)

Samantha, a RFW volunteer and amateur show grower assisted with the weekly growing sessions as a way of sharing her skills with the group and helping Kay, the RFW growing coordinator and session organiser:

"Kay's a nice lady and she needed help with growing. I mean she's learnt a lot but she still needed help with growing. And I thought, well if I can help her with my knowledge, then why not? I might as well."

(Samantha, interview, May 2016)

5.5.2. The need to socialise and rebuild a sense of community

The concept of a diminishing sense of community was raised on several occasions during interviews and observations. Participants reminisced of times when neighbours spoke to one another and families lived close by, keeping in regular contact and providing layers of support within society that are considered by some to be absent from life in contemporary Wythenshawe:

"You don't see family these days like you used to in the olden days. It's because they're always...busy... I always find it is an excuse really. People have changed over the years. They're not as community as they used to be."

(Dylan, interview, August 2015)

Interviewees who had lived in Wythenshawe for most of their lives described ways in which the district has changed over the years from their perspective. The loss of a sense of community was often framed in terms of the facilities that were previously available but have long since disappeared:

"I used to live in Crossacres and... there used to be Shenton's farm, which was fantastic. It wasn't a big working farm like this one, but they had chickens and they had animals and... I remember walking down there to get fresh eggs. That's all an industrial bit now as well. Near the forum at Civic... there used to be a lovely little row of shops there. One of them was a barbers with the old barber's turning pole outside. That's all gone as well... we've lost quite a lot of green spaces."

(Isabel, interview, November 2015)

Although Wythenshawe does contain a higher level of green space than much of the rest of Manchester (see section 4.2), informal interviews with local residents revealed that some were concerned about losing some of these areas through development of the district. Speaking about Sharston, the original site of Wythenshawe Farm before it relocated to Wythenshawe Park, the farm assistant described her memories of the area:

"There used to be a baths there, there used to be a pub there, there used to be a shopping centre there. Um, you know and gradually over the years, each and every one of them has gone unfortunately."

(Jennifer, interview, November 2015)

This perceived decline of neighbourhood shops and facilities appears to have had an effect on the way in which residents interact with one another and with their surrounding landscape. One participant lamented the lack of cultural diversity and community ties within Wythenshawe, blaming the council for "wasting money" on what she perceived as self-congratulatory frivolities such as festivals rather than community events that bring people together and encourage integration:

"There is no mix here. It's been destroyed. It really has. I mean I've lived in that flat and I've lived there for fourteen years. And I don't say hello to them next door, I don't know who lives above me. I haven't got a clue... I could lie dead in my flat and nobody would know. Until my friends come down one day or something, they wouldn't know."

(Amy, interview, May 2016)

The isolation felt by Amy was shared by Andrew, a growing session participant, who has visited Wythenshawe Farm regularly since he was very young. Several participants described the growing sessions as a reason to "get out the house" and socialise with the other volunteers (Andrew, interview, August 2015). Dylan described the growing sessions as a means of combatting the loneliness he felt following the loss of his wife:

"Oh, it's got me out in the community again, meeting people. Well I lost [my wife] this time last year..., initially, not so much the loss, as much as it's great, one of the worst things about it I have found was that it's lonely... And that's very hard, very hard. It's a long day when you get up in the morning. It's a very long day and you've no one to talk to, no one to pass comment to. Whether you're reading the paper, watching the telly... Yeah, it becomes very, very long."

(Dylan, interview, August 2015)

Amy talked about the benefit of shared interests and group members being “like-minded”. Growing was seen in the group as an underlying interest and an activity that linked people who may otherwise have very little in common (Amy, interview, May 2016). This suggests that although the growing element of the sessions was not always seen as a primary concern, the idea that group members shared a common interest was viewed as an important factor in fostering a welcoming environment for a diversity of participants.

5.5.3. Learning to grow vegetables

At Wythenshawe Farm, like the Macmillan community garden, growing vegetables did not seem to be the primary motive for participation; however, the volunteers did appreciate the opportunity to learn new skills. In Dean’s case, he viewed growing skills as a way to save money on food shopping, to “learn how to grow a bit of veg myself instead of paying for it” (Dean, interview, October 2015). Dylan, who was a professional gardener for several years before retirement, already had some basic growing skills, but he felt that the sessions had helped him specifically to learn to grow vegetables, rather than landscaping. He commented that the sessions had encouraged him to learn a new skill, saying, “I’ve made the effort and got myself some books” (Dylan, interview, August 2015).

Amy saw the sessions as a way of growing within the constraints of her recent health problems, saying “I can't garden because of me leg and me back and I can't lift because I've got no glands because of the cancer. But I needed something after I retired” (Amy, interview, May 2016). Although the participants agreed that they had learnt new skills through attending the growing sessions, Andrew was disappointed that the volunteering hours he had spent at the farm were not officially recorded and did not necessarily lead to employment opportunities, expressing frustration that there were no paid positions at the farm. He commented that “the downfall from it all is you’re not getting nothing out of it... You can't put it onto your C.V., yes I've done this, I've done that, because it's not recorded, is it?” (Andrew, interview, August 2015). Although proponents cite the potential for UA projects to provide employment opportunities within the city (Smit, 2001), there was little evidence at either site of job creation or new skills being used to gain employment. On the

contrary, particularly at Wythenshawe Farm, the demand for volunteers increased following a loss of paid employment at the park, while the majority of volunteers at both sites were retired. Rather than providing new employment opportunities, the growing activities at the park appear to be a symptom of a shift to an “activating state”, where welfare provisions and state intervention are withdrawn and citizens intervene to maintain services voluntarily (Rosol, 2012, p. 239). Andrew’s concerns highlight the importance of coupling skills acquisition with employment opportunities or a more formal method of progress monitoring in order that volunteers who are seeking employment feel that their time spent volunteering can assist them in their search for work.

5.6. Impacts of growing at Wythenshawe Farm

The impacts of growing at Wythenshawe Farm were in some ways less pronounced than those at the Macmillan community garden. This was perhaps partly because the group was less stable in terms of attendance and growing expertise. Nevertheless, impacts were observed within the group and these included an increased confidence in growing abilities and an improved diet for one member of the group. As with the Macmillan community garden, dietary impacts were very slight, if present at all.

5.6.1. Gaining confidence in growing abilities

Like the members of the Macmillan community garden, participants at the Wythenshawe Farm growing sessions felt that the experience of growing within the group allowed them the confidence to grow some of their own vegetables at home. Amy had previously only grown flowers and herbs at home but now grows vegetables in a raised bed in her back garden, saying that that as a result of the growing sessions she has started “branching out” and “getting more confident and trying new things” (Amy, interview, May 2016). Dean had previously stopped growing vegetables at home in order to allow his children to use a larger proportion of his garden. Attending the growing sessions at Wythenshawe Farm acted as a catalyst for him to start growing vegetables at home once more:

"So one year I'd grown a load of veggies in the back garden and then the next year it's returned to the play area for the kids, so like now, instead of having

the back garden, the back garden's just for the kids and I've taken the front garden."

(Dean, interview, October 2015)

The experiences of participants demonstrated a tendency to use acquired growing skills to cultivate vegetables at home. The link between vegetable growing skills and altered dietary behaviour does not seem as clear, as is discussed in the following section.

5.6.2. Dietary

Only one member of the group who was interviewed acknowledged that his involvement with RFW had resulted in healthier dietary behaviours. Andrew commented that he enjoyed growing vegetables on a small scale at home and was more likely to try vegetables that he had not tasted before. He also admitted that he was "eating healthier than [he] did", adding that as a result of his association with RFW, he had "cut down on them takeaways" (Andrew, interview, August 2015). Like the Macmillan group, a number of the members felt that they had a healthy diet prior to joining the growing group, and already consumed an adequate proportion of vegetables:

"I love vegetables. I mainly eat vegetables raw, to be fair. My mum, when she used to cook vegetables when we were a kid, she used to boil the death out of them. Oh, do we have to eat that?!... So me dad started growing stuff in the garden and we used to just eat it from the garden and it was so much nicer, because when you boil it to death as well you're taking all the nutrients out of it."

(Samantha, interview, May 2016)

Conversely, Amy felt that although she grew more vegetables as a result of the skills she acquired at the growing sessions, she was no more likely to eat vegetables than she was previously, saying "I don't eat what I've grown... I don't like vegetables" (Amy, interview, May 2016). For both Dean and Dylan, their ability to access fresh fruit and vegetables had not been significantly improved by their involvement with RFW, and although they had

developed a combination of growing and cooking skills, for Dylan acquiring the resources required to grow and to cook from scratch still held significant financial barriers. Dean commented that he was confused about the destination of the vegetables grown during the weekly sessions and whether or not it would be permissible for him to take any home:

“I was going to say “Oh, I’ll take some peas home”, do you know what I mean? But, like are they going to use them? I don’t want to say “I’ll take some peas home” and then they’re planning on putting them there... So I’m a bit like... [Signals confusion].”

(Dean, interview, October 2015)

Dean’s reluctance to take produce home or to ask for permission to do so is in direct contrast to the approach at the Macmillan community garden, where it was made clear that all members of the group contributed to the growing and all members were welcome to take vegetables home, with the remainder destined for the hospital stall. RFW has a strong focus on education and equipping people with the skills and knowledge to buy healthy sustainable food and to cook from scratch. The provision of relevant information has proved useful for a number of participants, however without ready access to the resources required to utilise new skills, the practical benefits of skill acquisition can be limited.

5.7. Wythenshawe Farm: Disincentives for participation

This section raises some of the aspects of participation that the volunteers felt could be improved upon and that may act as disincentives for participation. Unlike the Macmillan community garden, the majority of the obstacles faced by group members related to the infrequent nature of the sessions and irregular attendance of the volunteers. The group met for one afternoon per week, which most members agreed was simply not a sufficient amount of time to complete the work and it was argued that, particularly during the summer, the plants should be tended more frequently (see 5.7.1). While the Macmillan community gardeners only gathered for one morning per week, the site was more easily maintained as it was situated directly adjacent to the home of one of the participants, who

gladly took responsibility for watering and caring for the plants during the week in the absence of the rest of the group.

The second area of discontent lay with the difficulties the group faced in integrating with the other growing groups working in the park. Observations in the park suggested that RFW was faced with a level of suspicion from other groups, who were at times vocally disapproving of the project and concerned about the amount of money that was being spent on the initiative. Competition for space and resources were recurring themes in the interviews and during observations. This issue will be discussed in further detail in the second half of this section and again in the following chapter. The next section begins below with a consideration of the insufficient numbers and irregular attendance of volunteers along with the unstructured nature of the growing sessions.

5.7.1. An insufficient number of volunteers and the infrequent and unstructured nature of growing sessions

Unlike the Macmillan community garden, which had a small group of dedicated participants, the number of people attending the growing sessions at Wythenshawe Farm varied significantly from week to week. The few people who did attend regularly voiced concerns regarding the sporadic nature of attendance, which is briefly touched upon here and explored further in Chapter 6. One participant had tried previously to attract new volunteers to the project through word of mouth, but his attempts had proved unsuccessful. He also expressed frustration at the lack of commitment shown by some volunteers, who “come in... and they’ve done one day, little bits, and then they don’t come back” (Andrew, interview, August 2015). Participants generally agreed that one afternoon per week was not enough to keep abreast of the work. Several members of the group stated that they would be willing to attend more than one session per week; however the availability of the RFW growing coordinator appeared to be the limiting factor:

"No it's not [enough]; because you don't have enough time... If they turned round and said Monday, Wednesday, Friday, I'd do that... I'd be happy at doing it, but you need the input don't you? To say, “This is happening. That's happening”."

(Dean, interview, October, 2015)

"You've seen the walled garden haven't you? It's a waste of time... at the moment. Because there's nobody here to do it, and the same with the Tatton [display garden]. I can't do that on my own and do this as well. And one afternoon for volunteers is no good is it... Even Kay herself thinks that. Once a week is just not good enough."

(Dylan, interview, August 2015)

Dylan was also concerned that staff holidays would disrupt the growing sessions and would result in participants deciding not to attend future sessions. He recalled that during a RFW cookery course, which was run by the cooking coordinator Pam, "when Pam went away in between our cookery course... we missed that lesson and then the following week, when Pam came back, some of the girls didn't come back" (Dylan, interview, August 2015). This demonstrates that a lack of continuity can be a demotivating factor for participants, who may be less inclined to regularly attend sessions if they are fractured by absence.

The irregularity of volunteer and instructor attendance and a lack of visible progression through changing activities led to a feeling of confusion among the participants, who spoke of their uncertainty with regards to their role within the group and what to expect from the sessions:

"I come here on a Wednesday and I'm like "What am I going to be doing today?" Do you know what I mean? ...Are we going to be in the walled garden? Are we going to be in the Tatton garden? It's raining today so we're going to be in the greenhouse, but what are we going to be doing in the greenhouse?"

(Dean, interview, October 2015)

This confusion relates to the fact that during the data collection period, there was often no clear purpose for the group's activities in terms of where the vegetables were going and who profited from their sale or exchange. This contrasts with the Macmillan community garden members who, as discussed in section 5.2, shared the responsibility of decision

making and enjoyed seeing the fruits of their labours (Matthew, interview, October 2015). As Dylan commented, “I don't know where the farm shop gets a lot of the stuff from but they're not getting much from us are they?” (Dylan, interview, August 2015). Dean also demonstrated a lack of certainty over the money raised from the vegetables grown by the group:

“But, doing what we're doing there, the produce from that goes to the shop, but then, where does say the money go from the shop? Does that come back into Real Food, or have they got a community programme...? And then, you know, it's got to roll down hasn't it? It's all questionable in my head where it goes.”

(Dean, interview, October 2015)

Observations and interviews suggested that participants would have found their experience with RFW more enjoyable if there was a more structured growing plan, where the destination of the produce was clear and participants felt they had a level of ownership over the growing activities. It was clear that a number of regular volunteers were willing and able to assume a higher level of responsibility for the sessions, both in terms of attending more regularly and playing a more proactive role in directing the activities. One volunteer suggested extending the growing sessions in order for them to start in the morning and run for the whole day, with participants free to arrive and leave at their convenience. He recognised that someone would need to take responsibility for the session and that the proposed extension would be problematic for the growing coordinator to negotiate in addition to “all these [other growing] groups she's trying to control” (Dylan, interview, August 2015).

As Rosol (2012, p. 248) noted, gardening projects are more likely to successfully find volunteers to contribute to the running of activities “if the gardeners can determine the manner and extent of their commitment and work”. The volunteers at the farm were not afforded this level of agency, instead waiting for instructions from the growing coordinator before taking on a new task. Due to this induced reliance on management from the growing coordinator, work would periodically pause between small tasks in order to gain new

instructions from Kay. This was made more difficult by the fact that the role of growing coordinator involved other duties that frequently had to be dealt with over the phone or in other areas of the park. Dean expressed concerns over what he perceived as a lack of focus on the growing activities due to other demands on the growing coordinator's time, recalling that "Kay says 'I've got this meeting, I've got that meeting', so she's got to have them meetings for some reason, but... I don't know them reasons" (Dean, interview, October 2015). Similarly, Dylan commented that this diversion of attention was causing a distraction and he felt that activities would run more smoothly without external queries:

"[The growing coordinator shouldn't] keep answering your phone to [the Housing Group]... I mean I don't know what they ring about but it's constant isn't it? Every five minutes? I've said to Kay, 'once you start something, put your phone down! I don't care who it is.' If we're going to plant out in the walled garden, all those cabbages what we was doing, put the phone down or turn it off while you do it! And then, put the phone back again. Because you're constantly walking away aren't you? With the phone stuck to your ear. It's barmy."

(Dylan, interview, August 2015)

RFW was an ambitious project from the beginning and the response of the growing session participants suggests that their experience would have been improved if the growing coordinator had been offered the flexibility within the role to spend a higher proportion of their time on fewer activities. From the perspective of the RFW staff, in order to deliver the project and fulfil the expectations built into the funding bid, it was impractical to spend a larger amount of time on specific activities as this would inevitably be at the expense of another aspect of the project. This conflict raises questions over the feasibility of parts of the original funding bid, given the constraints of budget and time but also suggests that the project goals may have been more achievable if willing participants had been allowed the opportunity to take on a higher level of responsibility in the absence of a staff coordinator.

5.7.2. Difficulty integrating with other growing groups and sharing space

Wythenshawe Park hosts a number of growing groups in different areas of the park and farm that are run by various organisations and serve a range of needs. Observations suggested that there was little overarching management of growing space from within the park staff for individual groups leading to confusion among volunteers regarding allocated growing areas and responsibilities. Dean observed that there were “too many growing groups” working on different projects in a shared space and that planting in in such a large, shared area, led to doubts over which areas were being used by which organisations. He recalled a time when plants were wasted due to a misunderstanding over the allocation of space in the park:

“We took one of the patches and we put a load of peas in, and then the next week when we come in on the Wednesday...and it had all been dug out and someone had put potatoes in with the peas... So, it was kind of like, last Wednesday was a waste of time coming in.”

(Dean, interview, October 2015)

The coordination difficulties that this example implies resulted in participants struggling to understand their role and rather than helping to build confidence in growing skills, the uncertainty left participants feeling unsure of whether their actions were a help or a hindrance. Dylan viewed the diversity and multitude of growing groups as a potentially positive feature of the park, acknowledging that the situation would be improved if the various projects were able to work together rather than duplicating work (Dylan, interview, August 2015). Dean also noted that the competition between groups was curious given that the growers all had a common goal, but questioned whether RFW could ever really integrate with other groups due to the nature of its funding:

"There's so much division in here because everyone is trying to outdo everyone... and they're all just focused on their own things instead of thinking, "We're all growing veggies".... You need a bit of give and take

between them. But then Real Food is like Lottery based so it has got to have its shield around it."

(Dean, interview, October 2015)

This comment raises questions regarding the way in which fixed-term Lottery-funded projects fit into existing foodscapes and the ways in which they are viewed by other organisations. This is of particular interest during a time of austerity where volunteer community groups are increasingly taking responsibility for areas that were previously state-funded and competition for funding is high (Rosol, 2012). Rosol (2012, p. 240) describes the shift of responsibility of care of public spaces from the state to community volunteers as a result of "neoliberal urban restructuring", linking this to a decrease in state welfare provision, which in turn places pressure on the voluntary sector and increases competition between individual organisations. This aspect of the research is discussed further in the following chapter.

5.8. Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the experiences of the participants at two contrasting UA sites in Wythenshawe. It has discussed both the motivations driving participation and impacts experienced by the participants, followed by a description of obstacles to participation or factors that could lead to volunteer disengagement. Results demonstrated that participants seemed motivated by the opportunity to help others and by a desire to socialise rather than by an attempted rebellion against the existing food system or a particular desire to live in a more environmentally sustainable manner. The inclination to support others was a motivating factor for participants at both research sites and this willingness was particularly welcome at Wythenshawe Farm given the recent local authority staff cuts, which resulted in a reduced number of paid staff to contribute to the maintenance of the park.

RFW's involvement with the Macmillan community garden was predominantly limited to its early stages and following the site's establishment, the organisation decided to take a step back and played no further role in recruitment, meaning that most group members

were not aware of their involvement in establishing the garden. This distance allowed the community garden to run independently of RFW's control, enabling the group to make their own decisions regarding the use of produce, the organisation of the plots and the growing plans, a level of autonomy that was arguably crucial for the group's success. The involvement of a special interest organisation also led to the deliberate recruitment of people who were suffering or had previously suffered from cancer, rather than targeting people of particular socioeconomic groups, allowing the community garden to act as safe space specifically for the Macmillan participants. The selective nature of recruitment led to the exclusion of other potential participants and although the site was based in an area of high deprivation, the direct benefits of the community garden (with the exception of two local residents) were mostly reserved for those individuals who travelled from other areas. In this sense the growing site largely failed to reach local people who may have benefited from the opportunity to supplement their diet with fresh, healthy food.

At both the Macmillan community garden and Wythenshawe Farm, participants benefited from enhanced growing knowledge and skills, often leading to home-growing. The increased levels of confidence in members' growing skills however, did not generally translate to altered dietary behaviour, which was partly due to the fact that the majority of participants interviewed felt that they had sufficient access to fresh fruit and vegetables prior to their involvement with RFW. Impacts experienced at the Macmillan community garden also included the provision of vegetables for a stall at the local hospital, where the produce was exchanged for donations. Group members also spoke of the therapeutic impacts they experienced, describing the community garden as a space where they could temporarily escape their problems and socialise with others.

The obstacles encountered at each growing site were more case-specific, with the Macmillan community garden presenting issues surrounding the temporary nature of the site, while members of the Wythenshawe Farm group felt disenchanted by the infrequent and disorganised nature of the sessions in addition to the lack of commitment from other participants. It seems that the lack of regularity or autonomy to invest sufficient energy and time in the growing sessions left participants feeling as though they had been denied of a sense of ownership over their activities and experiencing confusion regarding the role

they were expected to play. Results also suggest that participants at the Wythenshawe Farm growing sessions may have derived more enjoyment from their involvement with RFW if there had been more clarity surrounding the purpose or results of their efforts. This contrasts with the experiences of the Macmillan community garden group, who enjoyed growing vegetables and seeing the benefit their work brought to the charity they represented. They also felt more engaged in the growing activities, which were more self-directed. The Wythenshawe Farm growing group also experienced some difficulty with integration at the park where the presence of other groups seemed to offer little opportunity for collaboration and competition for space occasionally resulted in work by the RFW group being hampered or even reversed. This aspect of the research is also raised in the following chapter, where the concept of competition between voluntary groups and organisations is discussed further.

Chapter 6

Institution-led Urban Agriculture: Considering the Potential and Limitations of a Top-down Approach

6.1. Introduction

The two preceding chapters first sought to identify the motivations driving the implementation of an institution-led UA project from the top-down, and subsequently explored impacts and dis/incentives associated with participation at two contrasting UA sites from the perspective of actors on the ground. This chapter assesses the potential for and limitations of a top-down approach with reference to interview and observational data collected from actors representing both orientations. The intention here is to bridge the gap between the experiences and views of those who carry out the project's growing activities, and the members of staff who are paid to coordinate those activities. This is achieved through an examination of a number of the assumptions behind the project and by assessing the success of the project in the context of the ideals that shaped the project design and methods of implementation. Through this approach, divergences of opinion between those leading the project and those experiencing the intervention on the ground, i.e. the volunteers, participants and visitors to the sites, are exposed and explored.

This chapter begins by highlighting some of the premises framing the project's aims and activities, and by questioning whether working assumptions, such as a lack of knowledge within Wythenshawe regarding food production, provenance and preparation, had sufficient foundation. The chapter then moves on to discuss key themes emerging from interview data that relate to the project design and delivery. These themes include the levels of responsibility and commitment shown by partnering organisations; the consistency of ideals and message from the design of the project to its implementation; and a consideration of the role of the project coordinators that questions whether project staff should consider themselves as implementers or enablers. The chapter ends with a reflection on UA projects and volunteering, which discusses the current landscape of local authority cuts and the associated tendency for UA projects to develop a reliance on voluntary labour. It also draws on interviews with volunteers in order to situate the

expectations of project staff within the context of the experience of volunteers, using the attendance at two external events as an illustrative example. This reflection allows for questions to be raised regarding the need for effective communication between project staff and participants and the benefit of allowing volunteers a level of ownership over their activities. The following section begins by drawing out the underlying assumptions of the project regarding food knowledge among Wythenshawe residents.

6.2. Assessing the accuracy of perceptions of food knowledge in Wythenshawe

Much of the work that RFW carries out appears to be based on an assumption of a knowledge deficit among the people of Wythenshawe. This is an important consideration when attempting to assess the impact and potential of the initiative since many of its activities sought to provide support through education and learning, based on a preconceived idea of the awareness and capabilities of the resident population. There has been some observational evidence to support this approach although it is questionable whether a knowledge deficit was always the primary barrier to pro-environmental behavioural change and indeed whether it is likely that this applies more to Wythenshawe than to other areas. The next section draws on data from observations and interviews to explore the basis for some of the assumptions surrounding food knowledge in Wythenshawe.

6.2.1. Public knowledge surrounding food production and provenance

An assumption underlying the project was that there was a lack of knowledge around food production among Wythenshawe residents and that this type of food intervention was particularly needed in the district. During an interview, Jennifer, the Wythenshawe Farm assistant, described interactions with members of the public that had cemented her determination to use the farm as an educational service to teach people about food production. She recalled a father who was visiting the farm with his children explaining that recently hatched chicks had sheltered under their mother's wing to "get milk off the mum". She went on to describe a separate occasion, where a young child demonstrated a level of confusion over the source of hen eggs:

“We had a notice up above one of the pig pens, and it had "fresh eggs for sale" and one of the kids quite genuinely came up to us and said "where do you get the pig eggs from? I want to buy some"... And they were quite genuine real questions... Questions that needed to be answered. And that's part of why we're here.”

(Jennifer, interview, November 2015)

Jennifer's observations relate to a disconnection between people and agricultural production, which affects the way we relate to and value the food that we eat (Steel, 2012). The comments of visitors to the farm can be compared with observations of a disconnection between food and its origins at the Macmillan community garden (as discussed in 5.3.2), where a participant's children rejected vegetables grown by their father at the site. The experience of seeing slugs in close proximity to the plants while they were growing resulted in the children feeling more comfortable with supermarket food, which had no visible connection with its place or mode of production. It would not be possible to ascribe these experiences to a general lack of knowledge specifically within Wythenshawe, but it does add weight to the argument that education around food production is needed in the wider area.

In this example lies one of the benefits of urban farms in making food production visible to the city dweller and providing a tangible experience through which people of all ages can learn about the origins of the food they eat. This observation is echoed by a small, non-representative survey of visitors to Wythenshawe Farm (as described in 3.4.4). When asked why the farm is an important resource for Wythenshawe, 14 out of 23 respondents considered educating children about food and animals to be a significant function of the farm, with a similar proportion also regarding the farm as an important opportunity for children to have contact with animals (see Figure 18 and Appendix 2). When asked directly if they considered urban farms to be a useful educational resource to give younger generations a better connection with food, all respondents answered “Yes”, and when asked for further comments, a range of topics were discussed including the value of giving children the chance to see food production “right in front” of them, an opportunity to

explain where food comes from, and a concern over the lack of places in cities where children can have this experience.

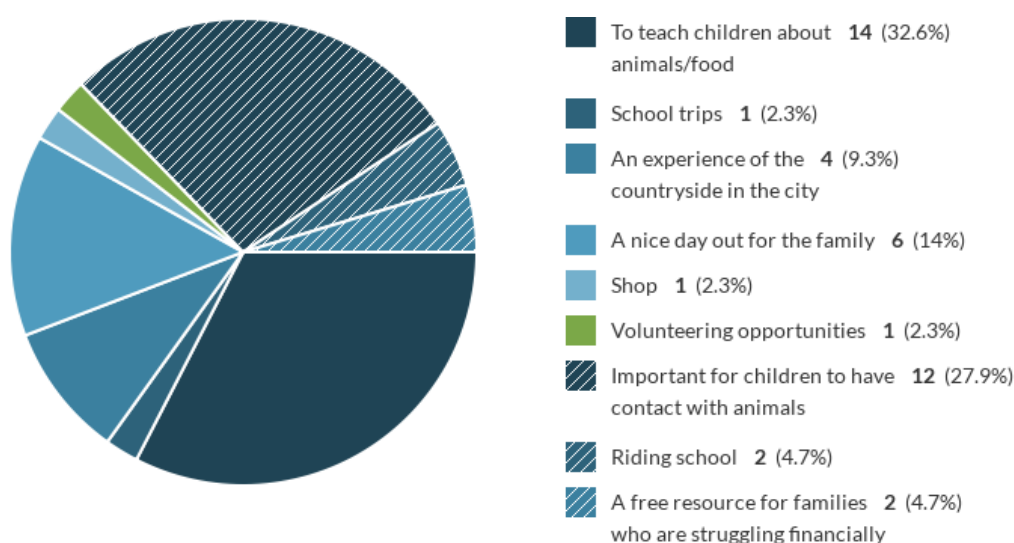


Figure 18. Survey of visitors to Wythenshawe Farm*: Responses to “Why do you think the farm is an important resource for an urban community like Wythenshawe?”

**As this was an open question and several visitors gave more than one answer, the number of responses is higher than the number of respondents.*

It was not clear from observations that participants and members of the public felt that this kind of initiative was specifically needed in Wythenshawe. Informal interviews with visitors to the farm and the survey mentioned above indicated that although people were generally supportive of the initiative, some felt that this type of work was valuable regardless of the locality (see Figure 19). The Wythenshawe Farm assistant agreed that education regarding food production and provenance should be offered more widely than just the immediate surroundings, noting that “it’s not only Manchester that doesn’t have a farm” (Jennifer, interview, November 2015).

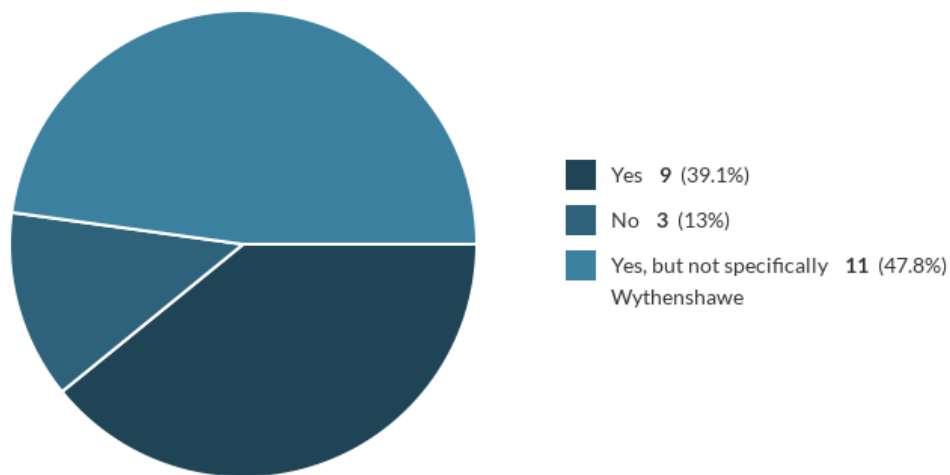


Figure 19. Survey of visitors to Wythenshawe Farm: Responses to “Do you think this kind of [food] intervention is needed in Wythenshawe?”

Jennifer also emphasised the importance of engaging people at a young age. The farm is unable to take on volunteers younger than 14 years old due to issues with insurance, so instead, the farm hosts a junior farm club for younger children “so all children of all ages can get involved”. As Jennifer explained, the children “come in and do some feeding and cleaning and grooming and they love it” (Jennifer, interview, November 2015). Isabel, the Wythenshawe Farm shop assistant, agreed that children “need the practical experience of coming to a farm and seeing the animals and seeing how they’re looked after..., what is produced from them or what’s grown”, adding that “It’s all very well reading a book, but it’s not as important as actually seeing it” (Isabel, interview, November 2015). Urban farms also provide a unique opportunity for volunteers to gain husbandry experience with a range of animals as they generally house a variety of livestock rather than focusing on one specific product such as a dairy or beef. This is particularly useful for potential veterinary students living in cities, who require a breadth of experience in support of their application to university. The farm also works with individuals who “have special educational needs, from all spectrums of abilities and disabilities” (Jennifer, interview, November 2015). These observations demonstrate the importance of education around food production and suggest that urban farms have a practical role to play within this.

The perceived knowledge deficit regarding food provenance among participants of organised growing sessions (as opposed to visitors to the farm) was less evident during

observations. As discussed in Chapter 5, most participants at both growing sites had some knowledge around food production and several had a previous interest in growing vegetables. Members also generally felt that they had an understanding of the origins of their food and how to prepare it. This observation raises questions regarding the ability of particular types of UA to reach different groups of people. It is possible that attractions such as urban farms are more likely to appeal to people who have no previous experience or little knowledge of food production than community gardens or growing groups, suggesting that urban farms represent a more inclusive form of UA.

6.2.2. Public knowledge surrounding food preparation

In addition to assumptions regarding a lack of knowledge around food production, RFW attributed some eating habits in Wythenshawe to a lack of understanding of how to prepare fresh, healthy meals. When asked about the issues that were preventing participants of the cookery sessions from buying fresh ingredients and cooking meals from scratch, Pam, the cooking coordinator responded that “it’s a mixture”, adding that “it’s definitely lack of skill, the knowledge and I think that’s really important... Give them the information then they make the choice. And that’s how you change behaviour” (Pam, interview, November 2015). Jacqueline, the programme manager, agreed, commenting that not knowing “how to shop” or “how to make best use of the things on offer” is a common problem, noting that, “If you’re a canny shopper, you can shop anywhere” (Jacqueline, interview, November 2015).

Pam and Jacqueline’s approach is consistent with what Shove (2010, p. 1273) refers to as the “dominant paradigm” of social change theory, or “ABC”. The ABC model of pro-environmental change consists of attitude, behaviour and choice and is supported by the underlying assumption that damaging behaviours are driven by individual choice, implying that if individuals were more appropriately informed, they may choose to exhibit less environmentally harmful behaviours. Shove (2010) argues that a policy focus on individual agency and choice cannot be reconciled with the UK Government’s observation that behaviours are often inextricably tied to “a combination of habit, disincentives, social norms and cultural expectations” (DEFRA, 2005, p. 1) and that policymakers’ inability to move “beyond the ABC” can leave other forms of social theory underutilised (Shove, 2010,

p. 1277). Shove offers examples of lenses through which social change theory can embrace context rather than externalising it, such as transition management and practice theory, advocating a move away from the conviction that pro-environmental behavioural change is driven predominantly by individual choice (Shove, 2010).

While RFW's approach of focusing on information exchange and individual choice may be beneficial for a number of people in Wythenshawe, observations suggested that knowledge around food preparation was not always the primary barrier to a healthier diet and that affordability of fresh food posed a problem for some. An example of this was evident during an informal interview at an event in Wythenshawe, where a visitor was asked if she would be inspired to go home and recreate one of the recipes demonstrated in the stall. She replied that while she and her children enjoyed the food, it would be some time before she was able to buy a bottle of olive oil or a butternut squash and that the basic ingredients of the recipe cards on show seemed out of reach financially. This sentiment was echoed by Dylan, a RFW volunteer, who agreed that the cost of the ingredients is "another down side", adding that "I do find that myself really and I'm working for them!" (Dylan, interview, August 2015).

By way of an example to illustrate this point, for one of the RFW recipes to be cooked from scratch, ingredients could be sourced from one of the major supermarkets for around ten pounds. As Dylan commented, it is possible to buy cheap ready meals that would have the potential to feed a family for less money. He recalled:

"In Frozen Foods, in Civic... there was a tray, probably about the size of that [A4] paper and it supposedly was a full Sunday dinner, but it was £1.75, so you've got to ask yourself, what's in there?... [But] Ten quid, or £1.75? You'd get three of them, don't you? Four of them?!"

(Dylan, interview, August 2015)

In support of this observation, a recent longitudinal study of food prices in the UK suggests that healthy food is more expensive per calorie than unhealthy food with the gap continuing to grow, raising concerns over increased social and health inequalities in the UK

(Jones, Conklin, Suhrcke, & Monsivais, 2014). When asked directly about the reality of participants and volunteers struggling to afford fresh ingredients, Pam replied:

“I still think you can rise to the challenge with the knowledge... Because I’ve cooked with people who say they can’t afford to buy fresh fruit and veg and yet go out and have a cig. And so it is those life choices as well. If I can’t afford to put food on my plate, am I going to still smoke?”

(Pam, focus group, November 2015)

As a response to Pam’s observation, it may be beneficial for project organisers to consider the reasons why people might perceive smoking as a priority over eating fresh fruit and vegetables, thereby removing the temptation to invoke a direct comparison to their own circumstances, which may be very different. It is accepted that people of lower socioeconomic status are more likely to be smokers (Hiscock, Bauld, Amos, Fidler, & Munafò, 2012), and in 2009, a study of French smokers suggested that people living in poverty were less likely to be deterred by rising costs of smoking due to a higher level of dependency. This dependency was associated with a number of factors including “stress relief, cheap leisure, compensation for loneliness, break-up or redundancy” (Peretti-Watel & Constance, 2009, p. 608). By viewing expenditure on items deemed to be luxury or inessential, such as cigarettes, as an emotionally or socially driven habit rather than an inability to manage one’s finances, the project staff may be better placed to empathise with their target audience.

This section has sought to expose two assumptions upon which a number of RFW activities were based. Results from Wythenshawe Farm supported the assertion that education regarding the provenance of food would be useful in the area and suggested that urban farms can represent effective spaces for knowledge exchange and learning. Observations also indicated that for some, financial barriers, rather than a lack of knowledge surrounding food preparation, seemed to be the limiting factor preventing the adoption of a healthier diet. Section 6.3 considers in more detail the design and delivery of the project and the ways in which the initiative was reshaped during its implementation following various changes to project structure, partnerships and priorities.

6.3. From project design to delivery: Strengthening the grassroots through effective partnerships, a common vision and a collaborative environment

A theme that emerged strongly through interviews with staff members and bid authors related to project partnerships and the ways in which these had been arranged, maintained or in some cases, lost or terminated. The project was designed in a way that involved numerous partnering organisations with expertise in a number of areas from health and mental wellbeing to communications and innovative design. This section begins by reflecting on the strength that partnership involvement brought to the RFW funding bid and the ways in which a number of these relationships changed through the duration of the project. Results suggest that by relinquishing control of some project activities and by decentralising control of relevant portions of the project budget, the project may have been better placed to strengthen partnerships through the project delivery stage. This is followed by section 6.3.2, which continues with the theme of central control of the project implementation through a discussion of the role of project coordinator, questioning whether RFW would have benefited from the project staff focusing on enabling activities rather than directly leading their implementation. The second half of 6.3.2 focuses on the project's experience specifically in relation to the Wythenshawe Farm shop.

6.3.1. The importance of developing and maintaining strong partnerships

As discussed in Chapter 4, one of the strengths of the funding bid was the involvement of two large housing associations, which later merged to become WCHG, acting as the project's lead partner. WCHG had the responsibility of managing the project's budget and the partnering organisations acted as steering groups, working in an advisory capacity. RFW originally had a diversity of partners involved, but for a variety of reasons, several organisations left the project in the early stages. This had the effect of narrowing the project's reach and potentially the level of impact the initiative was able to have on the resident population. Fiona, one of the authors of the RFW funding bid (introduced in Chapter 4), observed that while the partners were initially positive about the idea of a food-based intervention in Wythenshawe and were keen to be involved, the bidding process did not allow sufficient time to establish the appropriate actors within the various

organisations to ensure their continued commitment throughout the project implementation phase:

“A big... challenge that did hit Real Food quite hard was the level of buy in at this stage from the partners... because of the speed that the bid had to be submitted. Although all the Wythenshawe partners in particular were very committed to the big idea... and to the community in Wythenshawe... the people round the table in the first phases of getting this off the ground might not have been the right people within that organisation to actually grasp what was needed.”

(Fiona, interview, July 2015)

As discussed in the RFW project overview (section 3.5.2), the RFW coordinators played no part in the design or submission of the project funding bid. During the early stages of the project delivery, Daphne felt that there was that there was a lack of understanding among the partners regarding the vision and aims of the project from the perspective of the bid document, lamenting that there was “nobody at the housing associations that properly understands what [the project] was really all about”. At the time, Daphne was attending the partnership meetings on behalf of FareShare, a charity focused on the redistribution of surplus food, and a project partner. She felt that during the partnership meetings, it was useful to have a “little bit of continuity between somebody that was very aware of the totality of the bid and what it was trying to achieve... because a lot of the people that were attending those partnership meetings hadn’t properly read it” (Daphne, interview, August 2015). Serena, the ex-growing coordinator, attributed some of the tensions between project partners to “politics, people’s agendas and the understanding of the bid” and regretted the lack of collaboration with regards to forming a common vision for the project among the partnering organisations. She suggested that planning “strategic visioning, with someone external leading... so that [they] could all start off on the same page” would be a “valuable activity into the future”, highlighting the importance of partnering organisations moving “in the same direction” and having “similar perspectives” on what the project is attempting to achieve (Serena, interview, July 2014).

Another source of concern in the early stages of the project was that the partnership meetings lacked terms of reference and that “the partnership wasn't able to operate because it didn't have the [necessary] information” (Daphne, interview, August 2015). Daphne attributed this to a lack of organisation and planning from within the project, stating that “people weren't being sent papers in a timely manner [and] the meeting minutes didn't go out until a couple of days before the next meeting was happening” (Daphne, interview, August 2015). Jacqueline admitted that meetings were difficult to organise and that “running eight steering groups in the first couple of years was really hard work”, speaking of her disappointment that “you do all that work, you prepare yourself for that and then nobody turns up” (Jacqueline, interview, November 2015):

“Initially the partners came along, in the first year we got good attendance at meetings because it was a new project [whereas now]... I think they think "well actually, they're doing it, we don't really need to go to the steering meeting"... And lots of the partners have changed, so we haven't got the same partners and some have fallen by the wayside so it is frustrating that they kind of don't get involved.”

(Jacqueline, interview, November 2015)

When faced with the difficulty of persuading partnering organisations to attend meetings and to engage with the project, Jacqueline considered setting up meetings and “offering food”, stating that she has “always wanted to do something like an allied workers' lunch and maybe then invite partners in a much more informal setting, provide their lunch and then talk to people, because I've found that way works really well” (Jacqueline, interview, November 2015). She noted that when representatives from partnering organisations did attend meetings, they often began by asking ““what's in it for me?” [and] "how much money can you give me?", "we want a slice of the cake”” (Jacqueline, interview, November 2015). The departure of a number of the original project partners appears to be linked to the distribution and control of the budget and it seems that while gestures such as providing lunch may be well-received by associated individuals, they may not be significant enough to enable organisations to provide continued support to the project.

The success, or lack of success of partnership development is an important consideration when assessing the potential impact of RFW given the strength that the diversity of organisations could have brought to the project in terms of knowledge, expertise and connections. Fiona suspected that the loss of organisations in the early stages of the project “probably reduced down the reach and clout that the project could have” (Fiona, interview, July 2015). Along with the departure of the creative communications agency (as discussed in Chapter 4), Urban, Environment and Design (URBED), the organisation that was originally in charge of the design and build of the indoor growing system, left the project following concerns from the remaining partners that the budget allocation for this aspect of the project was too high. The financial limitations would have forced the organisation to “create an off the shelf geodome”, which would have entailed making significant compromises from the original innovative plans (Fiona, interview, July 2015). Fiona explained that tensions stemmed from the fact that “some of the partners that sat around the table at this stage were also the recipients of some of the money to deliver parts of the project” (Fiona, interview, July 2015). She noted that although both URBED and the creative communications agency were both in effect suppliers and strategic partners, they provided their services at “very low cost” and eventually “dropped out of the project very early on” due to concerns over the budget (Fiona, interview, July 2015).

Jacqueline admitted feeling as though there was a “bit of a conflict of interest... because [the creative communications agency] were being paid for something that they were partners on” (Jacqueline, interview, November 2015). It seems that there was an opportunity to make a choice as to whether partners should act as delivery agents and be paid to complete aspects of the project’s work or whether involvement from partnering organisations should be only in a voluntary, advisory capacity. This leads to the question of how to ensure commitment from organisations that cannot sustain themselves without a financial return. Sally, one of the managers at WCHG, expressed the opinion that the work of the partnering organisations “has to have budget attached to it because partnership work involves “particular organisations at particular times with particular priorities and particular people”, adding that:

“[The representative from the partnering organisation] will over time have a

day job to get on with, and their organisation will come up with a new strategy and they'll head off in that direction. What links it all together and what keeps it together is if there's money flowing... I think the problem comes when the whole budget is held with one team. The great advantage of having the budget held with our team and pretty much spending it all themselves is that... they get a really good amount of control over what they're allowed to do... I think the downside to it is that that doesn't lend itself to partnership working... And I think if you've got money flowing between the partners, then they have permission from their bosses and from their organisations to get involved and stay involved.”

(Sally, interview, June 2016)

If UA projects rely on charitable or voluntary partnership involvement, as observed by Sally in the case of RFW, it may be difficult for organisations to commit to their roles within the partnership, particularly given the likelihood of changing priorities and structures. Rachel, who had been working closely with The Manchester College through their involvement with the geodome, commented that organisational restructures, cuts and job changes within the college meant that their “capacity to come to a meeting might be reduced”. She added that “there’s a lot of politics going on as well... There has to be a benefit for them and I don’t necessarily think that the right people have sat around the table”. She noted that if they had “had better buy in from the college and more capacity with the team”, the geodome could be “used to its maximum”, but that currently, it was not being used to its full potential (Rachel, interview, November 2015).

This decision for RFW and WCHG to maintain control of the budget was in some ways a deviation from the funding bid that had originally intended for partners to deliver certain aspects of the project. As Fiona recalled:

“[RFW] needed a core of staff, but the idea was never that those staff would be the delivery agents... So you'd have Fare Share delivering a huge chunk of this, but actually enabling a big reach for that particular project. And [the hospital] delivering a whole strand of it, because... we mapped out trigger

points for behaviour change related to health... It would be the different organisations who were leading on it, to deliver a greater amount of impact. And then the core team managing that. Because the scale of it is well beyond what four people can deliver.”

(Fiona, interview, July 2015)

In Sally’s opinion, the RFW partnership was not a “true partnership” where various organisations had the agency to take ownership of relevant parts of the project, but rather “a partnership of people who... want to support and who... will come to the meeting and they'll listen and they'll give advice, but when they go away... they don't have permission to spend any of their time really, from their day jobs on this because there is no funding changing hands” (Sally, interview, June 2016).

The success of the partnership seems to be dependent on a level of mutual benefit in terms of being able to offer organisations a satisfactory incentive for involvement. RFW staff also stressed the need to ensure that signed agreements are in place where all involved parties have a clear understanding of their role, what is expected of their organisation and what they can expect from the project. Rachel’s experience with The Manchester College highlights the importance of establishing a level of commitment from involved parties at an early stage, being specific about what that entails and identifying an individual that can be held responsible:

“Although there was a partnership agreement signed... there's no real detail in that agreement. So it doesn't say, "Yes we're responsible for the electricity bills. We're responsible for providing the utilities. We're responsible for pat testing everything"... So that's been really hard because we've had to have those discussions... time and time again, with new members of staff.”

(Rachel, interview, November 2015)

Rachel also stressed the importance of keeping records of conversations and meetings, particularly those that make any financial commitments or specific responsibilities and keeping a balance between the demands of the project and the potential benefits sought

by the partnering organisation. While Rachel's experience demonstrates that this particular aspect of the project was seeking a bigger commitment and involvement from the partnering organisation in question, it seems that in general, across the rest of the project, that partnerships may have been more robust if the core team had felt confident in relinquishing some of the responsibilities and corresponding portions of the RFW budget to external organisations with specialist expertise. The next section follows the theme of the distribution of responsibility within the project by considering the role of the RFW coordinators in terms of the need for staff to act as enablers or implementers of project activities.

6.3.2. The role of coordinator: Implementing or enabling

The responsibilities of the coordinators, and the way in which the role was interpreted, was a recurring theme through interviews with project staff and authors of the project funding bid. Both Daphne and Fiona felt that the role of the project coordinators should have been predominantly focused on enabling and coordinating project activities rather than taking direct responsibility for implementation, whereas the coordinators themselves took a more active approach to project delivery. As Fiona noted, the original expectations were that "the partners would be much more engaged in the actual delivery and that they would take it and run with it", stating that, "It's just a different model of delivery now" (Fiona, interview, July 2015). Conversely, Jacqueline believed that the only way that the project could be successful was for her to act as an "operational manager", meaning that the role demanded much more of her time than originally planned. Jacqueline felt that the project was simply too large for "so few people" to implement and noted that "it just means that I end up doing loads and loads of hours" (Jacqueline, interview, November 2015). For Daphne, "the major problem with RFW" was that "the people that work for the project are doing all the *doing*, when that was never the intention" (Daphne, interview, August, 2015):

"That's the problem encapsulated, that's how Jacqueline sees this. She sees all of this as, they've got to do it. When in actual fact, they were supposed to be coordinating and enabling, supporting... it was supposed to be about helping groups of individuals locally... [For instance] if there's this piece of land

and [local residents] want to do something with it. They might want to just put an orchard on it, they might want to start a little growing area, um and you provide them with some materials. But it's theirs. They own it... But... no you're not *doing* everything."

(Daphne, interview, August 2015)

The RFW coordinators saw it as their role to "up-skill" volunteers in order to prepare them for assuming higher levels of responsibility within the project, stating that there are "people that just want to come along and participate and there are those that are there to kind of take more responsibility", with the latter being "the types of volunteers we want" (Pam, focus group, November, 2015). Pam noted that the process of up-skilling volunteers within the project was "a challenge in itself, because you've got to have the right people with the right skills and the confidence that they are actually putting out the right message on behalf of Real Food", adding that "those volunteers are really quite hard to find" (Pam, focus group, November 2015). The RFW volunteer recruiter and coordinator, Leanne, who works from the WCHG offices for one day a week, was an example of the kind of volunteer described by Pam. The project team felt that that they were fortunate to have a volunteer capable of shouldering a high level of responsibility and coordinating the other volunteers, noting that the paid project staff simply "haven't got the time to actually do that on top of [their] roles" (Pam, focus group, November 2015). In this sense, Leanne was seen as a member of the RFW team and was trusted by the project coordinators to carry out tasks independently.

Recruiting and retaining volunteers was an important part of the project; discussions with growing group members suggested that in order to sustain an interest in the project, volunteers would prefer to take ownership of activities for themselves instead of feeling that their involvement was simply assisting in the completion of someone else's plan. Observations during the RFW growing group sessions at Wythenshawe Farm suggested that there was the potential to increase the level of responsibility afforded to the volunteers who attended the sessions, but that this was perhaps not fully realised by the project coordinators. As discussed in 5.7.1, most volunteers interviewed agreed that the group would benefit from having more volunteers and from meeting more than once a

week on a Wednesday afternoon, with Andrew stating that “it should be every day” and that “there’s just not enough people” (Andrew, interview, August, 2015). The limiting factor for members of the group to meet at the park on a more frequent basis did not appear to be a lack of willingness or availability from the perspective of the volunteers themselves. Indeed, three of the volunteers interviewed at the park expressed a desire to attend more frequently and to take on a higher level of responsibility, with Dylan admitting that since he started volunteering with RFW, he has been working more hours than before he retired but that he would be happy to “take the weight off a bit... because [the project coordinators] can’t do what they’re doing and do this at the same time, it’s too much” (Dylan, interview, August 2015). When asked if he would feel confident in carrying out growing activities without supervision from a RFW coordinator, Andrew answered, “She’d only need to leave a note book wouldn’t she?” adding that the autonomy would allow the volunteers to feel as though their participation was “[their] own little thing” (Andrew, interview, August 2015).

Dean had several ideas for increasing numbers of volunteers and levels of participation within the community, suggesting that the RFW team could approach a local football team and offer to set up nets for the players in exchange for some time spent growing vegetables at the farm (Dean, interview, October 2015). Similarly, he suggested the installation of a remote control car track for young people in Wythenshawe Park, as he explained:

“[Kids] need things like that, because kids are interested in petrol cars and motorbikes and stuff. But if you said to the kids at the [remote control] car track, “you need to go over there and grow some veggies for us to get our fence and then to get a cabin and get transponders to do lap times”, they’d be like, “right, what days?!” You know, so even if you got them two days a week: Tuesdays, Thursdays after school for two hours, you’re laughing because they’re inputted in that and then the park is the base for learning.”

(Dean, interview, October 2015)

Dean’s ideas for increasing interest in the project along with his, Dylan’s and Andrew’s willingness to give more of their time to assist with the growing sessions, suggests that the

kind of people described by Pam as the types of volunteers the project needed, were indeed already participating in the growing sessions but perhaps were not being engaged as fully as was possible. Given the gap between the perceptions of the residents involved in growing activities and the project's approach, it is possible that community needs may have been more adequately met had the project staff engaged in a higher level of community consultation prior to and during the funding period. Although a consultation exercise was carried out in the early stages of the bid process, there was no continuation of personnel from the conception of the project through to its implementation and no indication that the coordinators were aware of the feedback received during the exercise.

One of the aims in the funding bid was for the project to develop "the capacity to build rapidly on active community networks and campaigns, and an existing platform of food initiatives" and for "dedicated coordinators and enterprise support to ensure initiatives are resilient and successful in the long term" (Real Food Wythenshawe, 2012b, p. 8). An example of the sort of activity or group that this approach might benefit was a community organisation that was interviewed by Daphne during the project design phase regarding its bread-making courses and its desire to setup and run a bakery in Wythenshawe. Daphne described the idea of supporting the group to establish a community bakery as an "absolute no-brainer", claiming that "lots of hotels very close to Wythenshawe would happily take artisan bread from Wythenshawe. It's like a social enterprise dream" (Daphne, interview, August 2015).

When discussing the role of growing coordinator, however, Serena disputed the assertion that it should be entirely an enabling role, arguing that the role was "always going to have a large element of facilitation about it to achieve some of the things we need to achieve". She felt that when the team was visible at events, it "gives the project more credence for people at a grassroots level", avoiding negative perceptions of the team that may arise from people assuming the staff are "just sat in an office making things happen remotely". She added that, "When your name is plastered all over stuff, you know "supported by Real Food", it's kind of nice to be there and to have a presence" (Serena, interview, July 2014).

In terms of the role the coordinators sought to play, while an increased visibility may have improved the way the team was viewed within the community, they demonstrated a

general reluctance to relinquish control, both within the project partnerships and with the project volunteers. The desire to carry out the project activities as opposed to supporting others to do so was illustrated during observations at Wythenshawe Farm, one of the research study sites, where RFW sought a higher level of control over the farm shop but struggled to pursue their agenda due to a resistance from within the farm. Here, contrasting priorities between the farm staff and the project coordinators meant that a common vision was not reached and progress to achieve the goals of either party was slow. The remainder of this section describes Wythenshawe Farm from the perspective of the farm staff and the RFW coordinators in order to illustrate the difficulties that can arise from different actors who have contrasting ideals and goals attempting to assert their own particular view over a desired course of action.

Wythenshawe Farm shop is located in a small outhouse within the grounds of the farm and sells a variety of produce from several sources. This includes meat, eggs and vegetables grown at the farm, vegetables from local markets, honey from Wythenshawe Park bee club, and other products such as cheese and chutney from external companies. Interviews with Jennifer, the farm assistant and Isabel, the shop assistant employed by RFW, revealed that in running the shop and the farm, one of their main priorities is that both are as accessible as possible to the local population. When the produce is sourced from the farm itself, it is always made “affordable for everyone” as the staff “feel it’s important that everybody has the chance of being able to come and buy a good, healthy, hearty meal” (Jennifer, interview, November 2015). They admitted that “the veg... in the shop isn’t by any means perfect” in terms of its aesthetics, but that customers tend not to object as they know that the vegetables have, for the most part, been produced locally. Jennifer observed that the farm has no “problem selling imperfect carrots or beetroot”, recalling that the previous year’s beetroot was “more carrot shaped than beetroot shaped” (Jennifer, interview, November 2015) but that it did not deter people from buying them because customers could see that they were fresh.

The farm shop operates on a relatively informal basis as the shop assistant works for only 10 hours per week, and for the rest of the week, its functioning depends on the availability of the farm assistant and the volunteers. Furthermore, the supply of vegetables and meat

from the farm was not steady and different products would be sold from one week to the next depending on availability. According to Isabel, the vegetables come from various sources including vegetables that are grown by the RFW growing group at the farm and additional vegetables purchased from Chelford market. The farm also accepts donations of vegetables from local growers who have an excess, with Isabel observing that “because it's a community farm shop and we don't charge [entrance to the farm], people are really happy to bring veggies and say "can you sell this?" and that's really good” (Isabel, interview, November 2015). The way in which the farm shop was run allowed flexibility in terms of allowing a personal approach towards decision making, for instance with regard to the fate of older vegetables:

“Once the veg starts going a little bit soft, [supermarkets] would've chucked it all away... But we would just reduce the price. There's nothing wrong with it. You can still use it, it's just not as firm as it was. Like I've got celery there that isn't in its best shape... So I just put a note on saying, there's nothing wrong with this, it's just a bit softer. Reduce the price and you can put it in your soup or whatever.”

(Isabel, interview, November 2015)

The staff members were keen that no vegetables would be wasted, with vegetables that are “past their best” but “still edible” offered to customers for free from a crate outside the shop (Jennifer, interview, November 2015). Jennifer and Isabel saw this as part of their role in terms of educating people to develop their judgement surrounding vegetables and waste. Their whole approach, while a little haphazard in terms of opening hours and regularity of supply, seemed to be focused on a personal approach that responded to the particular needs of people in the surrounding area of high deprivation, of which they are both residents.

While Isabel and Jennifer both had aspirations for expanding the farm shop and selling more produce sourced from the farm itself, their main priority was to serve the local population in an affordable and accessible way. When RFW became involved, the team began to consider ways in which the farm shop could be made more profitable and

appealing to visitors in order to make the running of the farm more financially sustainable. Jacqueline saw the potential in the farm shop to attract more customers by transforming it into a more traditional farm shop similar to those in more affluent surrounding areas:

“I would really love to move the farm shop to where the cottages are... and make that into a proper farm shop. That would just be the most spectacular farm shop I think. If... you know you had a picket fence, you had window boxes and then you sold the things that are in farm shops, and you did afternoon tea. I just think it's an absolute goldmine because the other parks in the area... they have very, very thriving farm shops.”

(Jacqueline, interview, November 2015)

Jacqueline believed that the farm and farm shop had the potential to be a “good success” but that the diversity of individuals and organisations involved made progress difficult to achieve. With Manchester City Council responsible for managing the park and different volunteer groups and professionals working in the park and farm, Jacqueline commented that attempting to organise anything within Wythenshawe Park and Farm was “a bit like herding cats” (Jacqueline, interview, November 2015). The RFW team had made efforts to improve the aesthetics of the farm shop on a number of occasions in the past but were faced with the reality that their efforts were not maintained and the shop always “reverts back to being a farm shop in the real sense of the word”. Jacqueline attributed this to the fact that “the farm shop is based in the farmyard and the majority of people that are in there are volunteers [so it] ends up getting very overlooked or it gets very dirty” (Jacqueline, interview, November 2015). The team’s efforts to “get in place a proper business plan” and “to try to get it on a more professional footing” were from their perspectives, largely unsuccessful.

A cause of frustration for the team was that they were not afforded the control over the farm shop that they felt was necessary to make the changes they saw as appropriate, with Jacqueline commenting that:

“When we go in there and sort out the shop, [the farm staff] can’t leave it alone. So they won’t let us run it on our own. If we could run that shop on our own, and say to the farm "Right, this is the farm shop. Real Food are going to run that. We’re going to open and close it. We’re going to lock the door when we’re not here", it would be much easier to do that, but they won’t let us do that at the moment. So, when we’re not there, they open the farm shop, it all goes to pot again. All the stock goes missing, nobody records what they’ve sold. It’s that, it’s trying to professionalise the service that is there.”

(Jacqueline, interview, November 2015)

While the farm assistant and shop worker both agreed that they would like to make some changes to the shop, they did not wish for that to take place at the expense of excluding people who could not afford to pay more for food or to access the farm itself. As Isabel explained, the farm shop makes “some profit” but will never “make a lot of profit” as they “don’t want to out-price [the vegetables] so that people can’t afford to pay for it” (Isabel, interview, November 2015). Jennifer agreed with this stating that:

“At the end of the day we are in the middle of Wythenshawe, you know, we’re not in Cheshire where you can probably sell what we do for maybe twice the price, you know? We’re in Wythenshawe so everything we do, everything we sell is always geared towards Wythenshawe people. For them to be able to afford to buy it.”

(Jennifer, interview, November 2015)

While entrance to the farm is currently free, RFW had raised the possibility of introducing an entrance fee to help cover the costs of running the farm. Jacqueline spoke of a nearby farm that charges an entrance fee and also charges for “buckets of carrots so you can feed the animals” (Jacqueline, interview, November 2015). The RFW team felt that there was a multitude of ways for the farm to make an income and were frustrated that there was a reluctance to accept new ideas from the farm staff:

“So, they will always say to us if they don't like the idea, that the park has a covenant on it so we can't, we're not allowed to charge people for example... because the park was gifted to the people of Manchester... in 1926, so if there's anything that they don't want to happen at the park, they always refer back to this covenant. And the covenant I really think doesn't say all of that. I'm not sure if it says all of those things.”

(Jacqueline, interview, November 2015)

Isabel commented that visitors are generally surprised and pleased that entrance to the farm is free and as a result the farm benefits from “people donating bits of money... because they love it so much. [For example], if they buy something in the shop, it may be £1.50 or something, and they'll give £3 and they'll say to put the rest in the donations, because they love the fact that it's here and it's free and it's in fabulous surroundings so people really appreciated it”. Isabel did appreciate that the decision not to charge an entrance fee was not straight forward because although Wythenshawe is “not a particularly affluent area... it is a working farm, and it does cost a lot of money to run it... There's always ongoing costs with the animals and things. So that's always a difficult one” (Isabel, interview, November 2015). When asked directly about the possibility of charging an entrance fee during an interview, Jennifer agreed that the farm staff have resisted the idea on the basis of the covenant, but added that “it was free anyway. The whole idea of it was so that anybody and anybody could enjoy it, regardless of their income” (Jennifer, interview, November 2015).

The example of RFW's involvement in the Wythenshawe Farm shop illustrates that moving forward with ideas can be problematic when two parties who have contrasting ideals and motivations attempt to work together. Considering the RFW staff feel that the project demands more of their time than they have available, it is perhaps surprising that they take such a direct approach to project implementation. Their reluctance to relinquish responsibility for certain aspects of the project and to drive activities rather than coordinate them is perhaps partly responsible for diminishing the breadth and impact of the project. The following section considers the tendency for community projects to rely on voluntary

labour and looks more closely at the experiences of some of the RFW volunteers during the project.

6.4. UA and volunteering

Many UA projects are heavily reliant on volunteers, with volunteering within communities attracting recent attention from geographers, some of whom are critical of the implications this may have for social equality and the entrenchment of a neoliberal hegemony (Ghose & Pettygrove, 2014b; Rosol, 2012). As discussed in previous chapters, the expanding critical literature on UA has begun to acknowledge the practice's tendency to further the entrenchment of neoliberal structures by inadvertently providing alternatives to services traditionally offered by the state. It has been observed that withdrawal of state support and the institutionalisation of volunteering can lead to competition between third sector organisations, frequently at the expense of collaboration, which could have a detrimental impact on the ability to sustain or upscale potentially beneficial activities (Rosol, 2012).

It is also important to consider the suitability of voluntary labour in terms of its ability to sustain UA projects and to explore the perceptions of those involved in order to better understand how their experiences can be enhanced and enriched. This section begins by introducing the context of staffing at Wythenshawe Park and Farm and the precarious and often sporadic nature of volunteering. It continues by exploring the experiences of volunteers who give their time to assist with the project, with a specific focus on the project's involvement in two external events: Dig the City and the RHS Tatton Flower Show. The team's involvement with events outside Wythenshawe was first discussed in Chapter 4 from the perspective of the project coordinators and is explored here from the perspective of the volunteers and growers.

6.4.1. The voluntary landscape of Wythenshawe Farm: Competition at the expense of collaboration

Wythenshawe Park acts as an example of a local authority managed public space, where the numbers of paid staff members have been in decline in recent years. As Jacqueline observed, "in the 1980s, when it was probably in its heyday, there was 24 gardeners at

Wythenshawe Park and now there are none” (Jacqueline, interview, November 2015). During an interview, the Wythenshawe Farm assistant, Jennifer revealed that the farm employs just two full-time paid members of staff in addition to the part-time farm shop worker employed by RFW. The farm also has approximately 50 volunteers registered to work at the farm, without whom the farm may struggle to function. The unpaid workforce includes workers from government-organised work schemes such as Seetec, which aims to encourage the long-term unemployed back into work. As Jennifer explained, Seetec volunteers work at the farm “five days a week and it gets them into the habit of getting up and getting ready and going to work, and going home again. It just gets them back into that routine” (Jennifer, interview, November 2015). A regular sight at the park was a team of community payback recruits, who could be seen helping with planting, landscaping and general maintenance around the park. There are also several growing groups who meet at the farm to grow vegetables in the horticulture centre and walled garden, including the weekly growing session organised by RFW as discussed in Chapter 5.

While the farm has a large number of registered volunteers, they are nevertheless subject to the sporadic nature of volunteer attendance. Jennifer recognised that this is “the nature of volunteering, because people come in as and when... There’s nothing else for them to do really... it’s not top priority” (Jennifer, interview, November 2015). This observation was echoed by one of the RFW volunteers, Amy, who felt that the projects like RFW should rely less heavily on voluntary labour. She cast doubt over whether the project could survive without more “paid workers”, as “volunteers can be time limited” and may decide after attending once or twice that “they don’t want to come again” (Amy, interview, May 2016). Amy felt that it would be unfair for an organisation to rely particularly on retired volunteers, to fill the labour gap created by a lack of paid opportunities and irregular volunteer attendance, adding, “I haven’t retired and gone into this for that” (Amy, interview, May 2016).

More recently, the council has sought to fill gaps in service provision by expanding the roles of particular employees and by combining departments. As Isabel, the farm shop bank worker and an ex-council employee explained:

“I worked in libraries for 38 years, and then four years ago, libraries and parks merged... Because they didn’t have a lot of park staff to look after the parks, the library staff then became responsible for putting jobs on for repairs to the playgrounds and various things. And we’d have our own responsibilities for the parks... but that’s all changing now. So libraries and parks are now splitting again, so the library staff won’t be responsible for that... So it constantly changes... There’s only going to be one manager over three parks now. So I don’t know what that’s going to mean. It could be interesting.”

(Isabel, interview, November 2015)

Jacqueline noted that staffing cuts within organisations made partnership work particularly problematic as “people just go into kind of siege mentality and they don’t come out to things that they see as being something that they don’t need to be involved with”. She suspected that the situation would not improve over the coming years, fearing that further staffing cuts were yet to be made:

“The staff that have been there [for a long time]... [are] probably on the third restructure where... they’ve had to be interviewed three times for their own jobs over the last four or five years, they’ve just become very cynical about everything.”

(Jacqueline, interview, November 2015)

The merging of local authority departments also meant that people who were previously comfortable in their roles have been removed from their comfort zone and in some cases placed into roles for which they lack the relevant expertise or experience. Serena, the ex-growing coordinator, noticed conflict between various actors at Wythenshawe Park early on in the project, where volunteer groups were resistant to new organisations functioning within a shared environment and competing for space. Serena suspected that these tensions were frequently exacerbated by staff cuts and job changes:

“There has been... a lot of tension between the various user groups in the park, i.e. the grass roots community groups that are using the space and doing a lot

of the growing at the moment... versus the council staff and the pressures they're under with cuts and people doing jobs that they didn't originally have, being put into positions that they feel probably very overwhelmed by... There's a definite conflict [due to the approach of the park management] ... because [they're] basically telling people what to do on the ground and [they have] no experience of food growing and no experience of agriculture."

(Serena, interview, July 2014)

Within an environment where staff are overstretched and periodically asked to compete for their jobs, it should perhaps come as little surprise that affected individuals can be averse to what they may perceive as superfluous interventions. The RFW project coordinators spoke of the difficulties they had experienced in their attempts to integrate with the other growing groups, with Jacqueline noting that following the winter of 2014, the groups at the park had "regrouped and blocked [RFW] out again" (Jacqueline, interview, November 2015). Jacqueline suspected that the park staff were "feeling really threatened by RFW" and she had been informed that they felt as though they were "losing [their] identity" (Jacqueline, interview, November 2015). Kay, the growing coordinator, felt that when the RFW group had produced a large quantity of vegetables, the other groups were concerned that by comparison "it makes [them] look bad". This was a source of frustration for Kay, who stated, "It shouldn't be like that. It's just about using the available space... It's not in competition with each other, we're doing this together!" (Kay, interview, January 2016). RFW eventually decided that attempts towards collaboration were so futile that there was no hope of the growing groups working together:

"I was [told] that [a member of park staff] would be the lead on the growing and we would fit in with all of the other community groups, learning disabilities, friends of Wythenshawe Park, community payback... But I found that that isn't the case... All I know is that there are only two [paid members of park staff], it's a very big park... That is totally infeasible... I'm not willing to do this fitting in with people who haven't got the time for the partnership work... It's nonsense, that's not what my role's about."

(Kay, interview, January 2016)

During observations at the park, it was clear that there was a tension between the existing growing community and RFW volunteers. This made it difficult for RFW to access space and resources and made the experience more stressful for RFW volunteers, who felt that they were constantly at risk of planting vegetables in the wrong patch or using another group's plant pots. During this time, the RFW volunteers were sharing the use of one of the glasshouses in the horticultural centre with another growing group, with a clear divide between the two sides of the room (see Figure 20). Amy, one of the RFW volunteers, expressed frustration over the division within the park and felt that the opposition was unnecessary, suggesting that it was the responsibility of the park management to ensure that all the various groups treated the park as a shared space:

“Say you’ve got the City Council and they’ve got workers over that side, I think before this side come in, I think the manager should come down and talk nicely to, not at, people and explain that this is going to be a shared space and they’d appreciate it if everybody got along, you know, and actually made the point of saying, “you’re great and all that, but it would be great if we could share...” I like a joke with everyone, so I find it quite hard to even comprehend that adults are like this.”

(Amy, interview, May 2016)



Figure 20. Glasshouse in the Wythenshawe horticultural centre

The somewhat hostile environment within the park perhaps reflects the uncertainty felt by voluntary groups given the existing financial climate where funding is difficult to secure, leaving organisations to compete against one another in order to survive. The need to compete results in groups with similar goals, such as providing vegetables for the local community, feeling unable to cooperate with one another and consequently duplicating work. The following section further explores the perceptions of RFW volunteers through the experience of two external events: Dig the City and the RHS Tatton Flower Show. This theme was first introduced in Chapter 4, where the team's attendance at events external to Wythenshawe was discussed from the perspective of those responsible for the implementation and design of the RFW project.

6.4.2. The experience of volunteering: Dig the City and the Tatton Flower Show

As discussed in Chapter 4, there was a level of disagreement between the project coordinators and funding bid authors as to the value of promoting RFW to people outside of Wythenshawe. The project staff felt that attendance at external events served to raise the profile of the project and allowed the team to “fly the flag for Wythenshawe”, whereas individuals involved in the design of RFW felt that this only served to distract from the work

that should have been taking place within the district. Furthermore, during the summer of 2015, observations at Wythenshawe Farm suggested that the volunteers did not feel engaged with the events and did not feel that attendance was necessary or relevant to the running of the project.

Preparation for and attendance at the two events was ongoing through a substantial part of the data collection period. It also involved actors from all three foci of the research: The RFW staff and project designers; the Macmillan community garden members; and the Wythenshawe Farm growing group volunteers. As such, discussions surrounding the events were a common feature of many of the interviews conducted. The events also provided an interesting example of where the motivations of the project staff did not seem to complement the perceptions of the volunteers and where a higher level of dialogue between the two perspectives may have been helpful to assist in the smooth running of the project. This section details the experience of the events predominantly from the perspectives of the growing group members.

The Tatton Flower Show is held by the RHS in Tatton Park, Cheshire on an annual basis. In July 2015, RFW attended the show and designed a display garden as part of a project with Reaseheath College, based in Nantwich, Cheshire. The garden, "A Taste of Wythenshawe" was inspired by the RFW project and designed and built by foundation year garden and landscape design students. As such, the RFW growing group at Wythenshawe Farm had very little involvement in the preparation for the event. The display did however win a Gold Award, and the garden was transferred to Wythenshawe Park following the event.

The RFW staff had planned for the growing group volunteers to tend the garden, but the volunteers were sceptical about their capacity to maintain the garden in addition to the growing activities they were already engaged in at the horticultural centre and the walled garden behind the farm:

"They were saying that "Look after it. We'll look after it.", but it's looking after it and it's having the time to look after it and having the people to look after it. I've watched that garden from last year, and when it started it was nice

[but] it needs someone who's dedicated to come in every day and just do a little bit on it."

(Andrew, interview, August 2015)

The appearance of the Tatton display garden deteriorated during the weeks following its transfer (see Figure 21), with Dylan commenting that "they've brought that garden back here haven't they? It's crap! [laughs]... A prize-winning garden and all that. It's a disgrace... I'd feel embarrassed, wouldn't you?" (Dylan, interview, August 2015).



Figure 21: "A Taste of Wythenshawe"

The RFW team attended the second event, Dig the City, from late July to early August in Manchester City Centre, with a display garden called "Fifty Shades of Green" (see Figures 12 and 13). The plug plants for the garden, which were supplied by Sadie, a member of the Macmillan community garden and a professional grower, were cared for at the Wythenshawe Park horticultural centre by Sadie, Kay and several of the volunteers from the community garden and the RFW growing group until they were the appropriate size for the show garden. While Sadie was paid to supply the plug plants for the display garden, she also saw the event as an opportunity to involve members of the Macmillan community garden in caring for the plants, and as a way to promote the work of the group while

teaching the members new skills. Accordingly, in the weeks running up to the event, the Macmillan volunteers visited the horticultural centre regularly to assist with the plants. As Bob explained:

“We were going over virtually every other day, certainly we were feeding them but it wasn’t just me and [my wife]. Daniel went over a few times, Matthew went over a few times, we were potting them plants, watering them, feeding, looking after them.”

(Bob, interview, August 2015)

Once the plants were at the correct size, they were transferred by the RFW team to Manchester City Centre in preparation for the beginning of the event. Sadie and the community garden volunteers were disappointed by what they perceived as a lack of acknowledgement of their efforts by the RFW team:

“What would've been great would've been for them to get some credit at the end of it.... It was just such an anti-climax... So yeah, you would get everybody involved and you would share that glory, you would share that publicity you would show the happy faces. People would know they were involved. You don't start pushing them out come the curtain close.”

(Sadie, interview, November 2015)

From observations at Wythenshawe Farm and the Macmillan community garden, it was clear that there was an expectation of acknowledgement from the community gardeners, but they did not feel that this was realised, feeling instead that their efforts had been taken for granted.

As a result of the team’s attendance at the two events, followed closely by the growing coordinator’s annual leave, growing sessions at Wythenshawe Farm were suspended for a number of weeks during July and August 2015. Following Dig the City, as Kay noted, the team intended to donate the remaining plants “to other community groups” (Kay, focus group, November 2015) and while a number of the plants were claimed by other growing

groups during this time, there was no plan for anyone to care for the plants in Kay's absence. As Dylan noted:

"If I hadn't've turned up out of the blue like I have done, this would've been shut down for two weeks wouldn't it? Who would've watered the plants?... They'd all be dead wouldn't they?"

(Dylan, interview, August 2015)

Interviews revealed that when sessions were cancelled, the volunteers felt that it was important that it was communicated properly to the entire group, however not all volunteers were successfully contacted in advance. As Andrew recalled:

"When I turned up the week before, there was that um, garden show. Turned up, me and Jon (another volunteer) then I went over there and I said "Where's Real Food, with Kay and that?", "Oh they're not here today". And that's all I got. I wouldn't have minded but it's a bit upsetting thinking that you know, someone should've told Jon. He's on his [mobility scooter].... it's unfair. And last week he was fed up with it as well. Like I noticed last week he was fed up, with that situation where no one let him know... There should've been a phone call there or something like that."

(Andrew, interview, August 2015)

On a number of occasions the growing group met without the presence of the RFW growing coordinator, but due to a lack of a firm growing plan or immediate leadership, they were unsure of what activities to undertake, with Andrew noting that the group was "stuck for things to do without Kay". Andrew commented that he would be happy to carry out growing activities without supervision, but that without a structured growing plan, he worried that he may be inadvertently "treading on other groups' things" (Andrew, interview, August 2015). This observation highlights the benefit of ensuring clear communication between project organisers and volunteers and allowing participants to take responsibility for aspects of the project so that in the event of an absence of leadership, volunteers have a good idea of what needs to be done and an appreciation of the overall plan.

In terms of the perceived benefits of attending external events, and as discussed in Chapter 4, the RFW project staff saw the events as something to bring a sense of pride to Wythenshawe and to afford a sense of accomplishment to the project volunteers:

“A lot of work goes into Dig the City as well, so it’s not just presenting ourselves on King Street. It’s those months before that the volunteers are tending to the plants. So the work is being done by our volunteers and it’s a really good achievement to bring those plants that they’ve worked on for months and months into Dig the City, to see it come to fruition.”

(Rachel, focus group, November 2015)

As per the description above, the majority of the plants used for the Dig the City display were grown by a professional grower who was contracted by RFW to provide the plants. Interviews with RFW growing group volunteers suggested that the events did not represent the rewarding experience perceived by the project staff, with Dean admitting that he found the experience “disheartening”, wishing that the volunteers had been more directly involved in the process:

“In a way I think they're buying the show... because it's not Real Food that's actually growing the food or the plants. They're getting a lady in, so they was basically buying the plants off her and she was tending to the plants... I know they got a Gold Award in Dig the City and that, but that wasn't Real Food produce... That was purchased from somewhere else. So if they've turned round to me and gone "Right Dean, I want you to do the perfect cucumbers. This is how you do it"... And give me the information to learn how to do it instead of getting somebody to come in and they know exactly what they're doing and you're just left in the dark about it... All them plants got put in the other greenhouse, they was all flourishing, they went off to Dig the City, I come back from my holidays, and I was told, "Oh we got a Gold Award". But I didn't see no benefit for myself because I didn't have no input in it so, I don't know. It was kind of a bit of a cheat.”

(Dean, interview, October 2015)

While Dean felt that the approach taken was “a bit deceptive”, Sadie commented that signage at the event stating that all the vegetables from the display garden were “grown in Wythenshawe” was “misleading” because “[she] grew the plants and [she’s] a professional grower” (Sadie, interview, November 2015). Indeed, the experience contributed to the division felt between members of the Macmillan community garden and the RFW team, with Bob saying of his experience that he is “never having involvement with Real Food again” adding “I just do not like what they did”. Bob’s experience led to a disapproval of the entire project and coloured his views of the project coordinators, stating that:

“I’ve realised that what they do is they get paid a lot of money and they get the people to do all the work for them. That is exactly how I see it. They get all the money, they get the plaudits and other people do all the work for them. Last year, from what I can understand... they’re taking plaudits about the Tatton garden.... They didn’t do that garden, Reaseheath College, the students there did that garden, but who gets the plaudits again? Real Food. So, what they do is use and abuse and that’s how I see them.”

(Bob, interview, August 2015)

While Bob’s view does not represent the view of all of the project volunteers, as a Wythenshawe resident, his opinion has the potential to shape how the project is viewed more widely. Clearer communication between the project organisers and the volunteers and a willingness to share responsibility, publicity and praise may have alleviated some of the tensions arising as a result of involvement with Dig the City.

Another reason that the RFW team decided to attend external events was their desire to promote the district to other areas by “flying the flag” for Wythenshawe. Kay explained that displaying the project’s work in central Manchester was a necessary part of “breaking down a barrier... where Wythenshawe is separate to everything else... Because we are part of Manchester. It’s about making those links” (Kay, focus group, November 2015). Once

again, the views of the coordinators did not seem to match those of the volunteers, many of whom expressed the opinion that the time and resources would be better spent within Wythenshawe, with Dylan commenting that there was little point in “promoting Wythenshawe to Tatton”, as Tatton residents are “a different class of people. They’re not interested in Wythenshawe” (Dylan, interview, August 2015). He added that the Gold Award for the Tatton garden was irrelevant for the area:

“It doesn’t matter that it’s from Wythenshawe does it? It doesn’t matter if it’s Moss Side. They’ve not won it because of that have they?”

(Dylan, interview, August 2015)

From observations and interviews at Wythenshawe Farm and the Macmillan community garden, it seems clear that attendance at the two external events discussed was not viewed positively by a number of the volunteers involved. The motivations driving involvement from the perspectives of the RFW staff (as discussed in Chapter 4) surrounded the idea that Wythenshawe should be externally promoted in order to change people’s perceptions of the area and to stimulate community pride from the outside-in. The volunteers interviewed did not view this as an effective approach, instead signalling that they would have preferred an activity with a mutually beneficial outcome and a higher level of volunteer involvement.

6.5. Conclusion

This chapter has sought to bring together issues raised in the previous two chapters firstly by exploring two of the assumptions regarding knowledge levels among the Wythenshawe population, secondly by discussing the partnerships within the project and the roles of the project coordinators, and thirdly, by highlighting the experience of project volunteers, predominantly based at Wythenshawe Farm.

The chapter began by exploring two of the assumptions upon which many of the RFW activities seemed to be based. Firstly, that there is a lack of knowledge around food production and provenance and secondly, that there is a lack of knowledge and skills around food sourcing and preparation in Wythenshawe. The experience of staff at

Wythenshawe Farm suggests that there is a lack of knowledge among the general public surrounding the mode of food production, however, observations did not support the idea that a lack of knowledge surrounding food preparation was the primary barrier to adopting a healthy diet. In questioning the first assumption regarding local knowledge of food provenance, the research has highlighted that urban farms can be seen as a valuable space for knowledge exchange, particularly for young people in cities, where there are few opportunities to view food production in action. With regard to the second assumption surrounding food sourcing and preparation, observations suggest that financial barriers to the consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables were a more immediate concern than a lack of knowledge regarding food preparation. This observation raises questions over the suitability of the perception that individual choice should be considered as a main driver of behavioural change.

Section 6.3 discussed the importance of partnership work in UA projects, observing that while a diversity of partnering organisations was a major strength of the RFW funding application, a number of partners left the project in its early stages primarily as a result of a lack of financial commitment. This suggests that holding the project's entire budget within one central organisation can lead to a dynamic whereby the partnering organisations do not feel that they have sufficient control over relevant aspects of the project and instead lack the autonomy to use their particular expertise to its full potential. Similarly, the following section introduced the idea that project coordinators acted primarily as implementers of the project activities, while a number of actors felt that the project would have more reach and impact if the project staff were able to relinquish a level of responsibility and act as enablers.

The final section of the chapter raised the issue of volunteering in UA projects, beginning by acknowledging the challenging funding environment within local authorities and charitable organisations that can lead to groups with similar goals competing with one another at the expense of collaboration. The functioning of Wythenshawe Park and Farm is dependent on volunteers and due to competition for resources and space, the RFW growing group found the park to be a challenging environment in which to integrate. This section finished by considering the experience of volunteers through their involvement

with two external events attended by RFW, Dig the City and the Tatton Flower Show. Observations and interviews suggested that the majority of volunteers would find the experience more rewarding if the project staff were able to relinquish a level of responsibility and to allow volunteers to take ownership for certain aspects of the project.

Chapter 7

Discussion

Chapter 2 revealed several gaps in knowledge that have been approached by this research. To reiterate, the four areas of focus established in the literature review consisted of:

- the need for a critical exploration of the motivations and impacts of institution-led UA projects, including a consideration of the role of volunteering;
- an investigation into the motivations of UA project participants in a UK context;
- a need to identify and contrast the motivations and needs of actors across all levels of society involved in or affected by UA practices and to consider the specific benefits of contrasting forms of UA and;
- an investigation into the development and impact of temporary growing sites.

This chapter will address each of these areas, beginning with a critical exploration of the motivations and impacts of RFW as an institution-led UA project.

7.1. Motivations and impacts of an institution-led UA project

Chapter 4 explored some of the aims of RFW and the motivations driving the initiative from the perspectives of the authors of the project funding bid, the project coordinators and the WCHG management, while Chapter 5 detailed impacts experienced by participants at two UA growing sites. The top-down orientation of the RFW project is of particular interest here in the light of recent claims regarding UA's potential to encourage the reorganisation of urban life from the grassroots by providing "radical alternatives to the capitalist neoliberal organisation of urban life" (Tornaghi, 2014, p. 2). If UA from the grassroots can be driven by a perceived need for radical social and political change, it is also necessary to question the motivations driving institution-led UA projects, which are typically directed from the top-down.

In the case of RFW, the project gained the approval and support of the local housing association due to the organisation's desire to be active within the community and their mandate to support the health of the local residents, observing that healthy residents are

more likely to maintain their employment and be able to afford rent. Factors driving the project design included an awareness of existing grassroots growing groups and food-related activities in the area and a desire to provide and coordinate resources to improve local resilience, health, and access to fresh fruit and vegetables. While the project coordinators were motivated by broadly similar concerns, their approach seemed more aligned to a missionary-style intervention, with staff viewing residents of Wythenshawe as people who required assistance in their attempts to adopt necessary behavioural change. Chapters 4 and 6 note that care should be taken when expressing assumptions regarding local capabilities, and that perceived barriers to behavioural change, such as a lack of knowledge in a particular area, may not always be the main obstacle preventing change. Questioning or avoiding these assumptions may have been more likely if members of the project implementation team had been involved in the consultation exercises during the project design or if local ambassadors were more heavily involved in the project delivery so that activities could be guided using a deeper understanding of the local area.

The project coordinators were also driven by an ambition to alter perceptions of the district and to “fly the flag” for Wythenshawe by attending external events and promoting the area as a green place to live. These “greening agendas” are a key concern for Tornaghi (2014, pp. 552-553), who states that such projects have the potential to “form a prelude to conspicuous public budget cuts” and that “we know very little of how effectively these initiatives are achieving their aims.” The experimental nature of the CLS funding stream meant that the funded projects had space to adjust to changes within their localities. This approach allowed for a level of flexibility regarding the initial goals of the funding bid; however, due to the lack of continuity stemming from the design of RFW through to its implementation, assessing how successfully the project has achieved its aims is problematic. This research has nevertheless revealed a number of impacts experienced by project participants at two contrasting growing sites, which were detailed in Chapter 5.

Findings from the Macmillan community garden demonstrate that the impacts on participants were wide-ranging. The collaboration between two organisations enabled the successful initiation and development of the community garden, but through clashes of priorities and difficulties with communication, the association proved to be divisive. The

involvement of a special interest organisation allowed the community garden to act as safe space for the Macmillan participants, but led to the exclusion of other potential participants and hindered RFW's goal of accessing their target group of people in Wythenshawe who struggle to access fresh, healthy food. The fact that the project had difficulties in reaching people in Wythenshawe experiencing disadvantage supports Kneafsey et al. (2017, p. 11)'s observation that "charity-led food initiatives" are "often unable to reach the most marginalised communities". They note that while their activities often have social value, they frequently fail to have a substantial impact on food injustice adding that these types of interventions do not have the capacity to instigate "the large-scale behavioural and political changes that are required to address the UK's food injustices", which must be addressed on a far wider scale (Kneafsey et al., 2017, p. 11). Members of the Macmillan community garden did however experience numerous other benefits of the site, including an opportunity to socialise and a space for temporary escape. The activities of the growing site also provided a new outlet for fresh, local vegetables in Wythenshawe at the local hospital. The multiplicity of impacts of the community garden could be seen to support Holland (2004)'s suggestion that these types of UA sites can represent good value for money for local investment.

Given that RFW aims to teach Wythenshawe residents to grow their own food and that a large aspect of their work focuses on pro-environmental behavioural change through the adoption of sustainable diets, it is perhaps surprising that the community garden had very little impact on the dietary behaviour of the Macmillan community gardeners. This also appeared to be the case for participants at the Wythenshawe Farm growing group, the majority of whom felt that they had gained new growing skills as a result of growing session attendance but that this had had little effect on their dietary behaviour, which had remained largely unchanged. Although this observation applies only to the participants of this research and cannot be further extrapolated, if the lack of a connection between diet and involvement in UA activities is indeed more widespread, this invites questions regarding the potential of UA to feed its participants rather than simply providing social and health benefits.

The effectiveness of the project does however appear to have been hampered by a number of factors that have been highlighted in the previous chapters: firstly, the early disintegration of partnerships, which stifled the project's potential reach and limited its access to expertise; and secondly, the centralised control of resources within the project's lead partnering organisation, and the staff members' attempts to implement project activities directly as opposed to coordinating and supporting the work of others. If levels of responsibility and portions of the budget had been more actively spread among project partners and participants, the project may have reached a larger number of people and had access to a broader spectrum of expertise. The direct allocation of finance to partnering organisations may have given their representatives the freedom to make a stronger commitment to the project while an ability to relinquish control over project activities may have allowed volunteers to feel a greater sense of ownership over their participation and to gain a greater sense of satisfaction from their involvement. As discussed in Chapter 5, the autonomy experienced by the members of the Macmillan community garden was not shared by participants at the Wythenshawe Farm growing group, who may have benefited from the opportunity to participate in decision making and planning. This observation is in line with Rosol's (2012, p.248) assertion that volunteer growers seek "minimal interference in the design and their way of running the lots..." and prefer not to "work in a hierarchical project, controlled and managed from the outside". The following section discusses the concept of volunteering in UA projects in more detail.

7.2. Volunteering as a neoliberal strategy

Rosol (2012, p. 239) has highlighted the need for critical researchers to analyse "processes of neoliberalisation in the practice of urban development". This includes drawing attention to "soft [outsourcing] strategies" such as the involvement of NGOs and volunteers in the process of governance, which is symptomatic of a "changing relation between state and citizens, usually described as a change from a welfare providing state to an activating state" (Rosol, 2012, p. 239). This shift describes a process of retraction of public service provision by central government, and an attempt by civil society to offer services that were previously provided by the state. Rosol (2012) views the rise of volunteering as an important part of this process, aspects of which could be observed in Wythenshawe. While there was no

obvious causal relationship between the RFW urban growing activities and public funding cuts, the example of the growing group at Wythenshawe Park and Farm demonstrated the coexistence of local authority budget and staff cuts and the influx of voluntary labour to fill the gaps in service provision.

The teams of Community Payback and Seetec workers, who were frequently visible assisting with manual labour within the park, signalled a shift towards the outsourcing of public service provision. Rosol (2012) makes the important distinction between “voluntarism and workfare”, with the former represented by citizens who occupy a position of privilege, having spare time to pursue hobbies and interests; and the latter functioning as an instrument of government, used to “control the unemployed and discipline the lower classes” (Rosol, 2012, p. 250). This essentially professionalised volunteer workforce functions within a managerial and often competitive environment, making collaboration and cooperation more difficult to foster among organisations working towards similar goals (Fyfe & Milligan, 2003; MacKinnon, 2000; Rosol, 2012). Conflict was observed during observations and interviews at Wythenshawe Park, where a number of growing groups competed for space and resources, and were unreceptive to new groups using the area as a base for operations. This behaviour reflects the need for organisational self-preservation within a competitive funding environment, but results in groups with similar goals and often complementary ideologies working against one another rather than in cooperation. In the case of the RFW growing groups, these conflicts served to provide distractions and potentially compromised the levels of progress achieved.

Chapter 6 also described the irregular nature of volunteer attendance and the problems associated with relying heavily on volunteers to maintain public spaces. These observations are aligned with Milligan (2000, p. 195)'s observation that voluntary work “is often piecemeal and sporadic, owing as much to the availability of resources as it does to any planned action based on an identified need”. A reliance on volunteering, as opposed to workfare schemes as mentioned above, also has the potential to further entrench social inequalities (Fyfe & Milligan, 2003). This is, in part, due to the preconditions for volunteering, which tend to demand that individuals have the free time and resources to dedicate their efforts to a cause without payment. This is a particular type of privilege to

which not all people have access. As Alkon & Agyeman (2011, p. 2), the people involved in food movements tend to be “white and middle class”, making the area “something of a monoculture”. This is particularly problematic when the associated activities strive for societal change, as it means that people with access to resources such as spare time, are able to exercise a higher level of political agency.

7.3. Grassroots motivations: A UK context

Motivations of participants at the two study sites were explored in Chapter 5. For both sets of participants, the desire to help others was a strong motivating factor. At the Macmillan community garden, the exchange of vegetables for charitable donations at the local hospital was a significant part of this. At the Wythenshawe Farm growing sessions, group members were driven by a desire to help with the maintenance of a local space. Participants at both sites were motivated to attend the growing sessions by a need to socialise with others. At the Macmillan community garden, members looked forward to an informal environment where they could enjoy discussions, jokes and mutual support over a cup of tea, while participants at Wythenshawe Farm saw the sessions as a reason to leave their homes and a means of attempting to rebuild a sense of community that some felt had been lost from the area.

The recent narrative of UA activities as driven by participants attempting to subvert the dominant food system and make radical social or political change, or conversely, as a neoliberal prop, has become popular among critical geographers, particularly in the North American context (McClintock, 2014; Pudup, 2008). Community gardens in particular have received attention for being perceived as either radical (Mckay, 2011), or neoliberal in their outcomes (Pudup, 2008), or as being both radical and neoliberal by necessity (McClintock, 2014). As noted in Chapter 2, there is some doubt as to whether this particular narrative holds as much relevance in the UK context (Kneafsey et al., 2017; Milbourne, 2012). While acknowledging the susceptibility of community gardening to the entrenchment of a neoliberal hegemony, Crossan et al. (2016) argue that this should not detract from a group's ability to effect political practice through DIY citizenship, whereby group members can re-evaluate their relationship with the environment and with each other through community gardening. This concept has more resonance for the experience of the

Macmillan group members, who were not consciously politically motivated, nor did they actively seek radical alternatives to our capitalist way of life. Similarly, participants at the Wythenshawe Farm growing group were not driven by radical motives and contributed to the growing activities through a sense of generosity and a desire to connect with others. This research offers a further example of a geographical contrast of the motivations of UA participants and suggests the use of alternative lenses through which to view their actions and a sensitivity to the political and socioeconomic context in which the UA activities take place.

7.4. Identifying and contrasting actors at multiple scales

As outlined in the literature review, Napawan (2016) suggests that in order to stimulate effective UA initiatives, there is a need to consider perspectives of a variety of actors from contrasting societal positions including representatives of local authorities and members of community groups, if institution-led UA projects are to realise their full potential. Napawan (2016) also calls for a consideration of the specific benefits and challenges of different forms of UA in order to better understand their suitability within a variety of contexts, while Colasanti et al. (2012) note the need for an exploration of public perceptions of UA, and in particular, the perceptions of those people who occupy the spaces on the periphery of UA activities.

While Chapter 4 considered motivations of the project implementers, housing group management and funding bid authors, Chapter 5 explored the motivations and concerns of participants from the grassroots. Chapter 6 attempted to bring these perspectives together and to highlight areas where opinions of different actors diverged. This exercise revealed that while the project coordinators sought to maintain a large proportion of control over the budget and implementation of the project activities, it may have been beneficial from the perspective of the partnering organisations and the volunteers, for project staff to relinquish a level of control, thereby affording a wider spread of responsibility and increasing the reach and potential of the project. In making reference to the short questionnaire carried out with visitors to Wythenshawe Farm, this chapter also reflected on opinions of those on the periphery of the UA activities. While the sample of respondents was not representative of the general population of Wythenshawe and the sample size was

very small, the responses did offer an insight into the reasons for visits to the farm and its perceived value. The visitors surveyed suggested that the farm was highly valued as a place where people, and in particular children, could learn about food production and come into contact with animals in a city context. This observation contrasts with the experience of participants at the Macmillan community garden, who valued the educational experience of growing vegetables in a shared space, but did not describe it as the main motivating factor for their attendance.

The need to contrast perceptions of actors at different scales extends to the value that various groups place on activities and their associated spaces. Schmelzkopf (2002) and Smith and Kurtz (2003) note that while landowners view land in terms of its exchange value, community gardens tend to be measured by their use value in that their associated impacts are often immaterial, making any calculation of their financial value problematic, if irrelevant. This tension highlights one of the difficulties presented by actors at different scales having contrasting perceptions of value, and points to a greater need for more effective communication between landowners and land users. This is a particularly relevant consideration when the land users' access to the site is only temporary, which is discussed further in the following section.

7.5. Temporary spaces

As discussed in Chapter 2, the rise in use of temporary areas of urban land or “meanwhile” sites for food production provides areas for research in terms of their capacity to improve local food access, to contribute towards a more cohesive community and to reduce social inequalities. Demailly and Darly (2017) note that the dynamic nature of cities lends itself to the continuing production of vacant spaces, lying in wait for their next stage of development. As such, the period of time between destruction and development does not need to be viewed simply as a “waiting period”, but can take on a new productive meaning. They argue that empty spaces need not be “simply spaces “to fill”, but places whose own materiality, even if precarious, is valued” (Demailly & Darly, 2017, p. 337).

The experience of the Macmillan community garden demonstrates that while temporary growing sites have the potential to offer multiple benefits to participants, the production

of such spaces does not occur without significant investment from organisers and members. The group's reluctance to take responsibility for a second temporary plot suggested that in their opinion, the benefits of the particular site were outweighed by the disappointment of handing control of the plot back to the landowners. This was perhaps partly due to unrealistic expectations from the group members, which were allowed to develop following a paucity of communication from the landowners and intermediaries. Without secure tenure, sustaining growing projects can be problematic and the prospect of being deprived of the fruits of their labour can leave community members feeling disheartened or exploited rather than empowered.

Chapter 8

Conclusion, Recommendations and Further Work

8.1. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has met the objectives outlined at the beginning of the document firstly by conducting a comprehensive desktop study of the relevant literature in order to establish areas of interest and highlight gaps in knowledge, which were presented in Chapter 2. Chapter 4 demonstrated that the second objective of gaining a comprehensive understanding of the project's activities, its desired achievements and methods of implementation were achieved through ongoing dialogue with key stakeholders. In addressing the third objective, the research engaged with key participants and stakeholders and a detailed overview of the project's design and the motivations and expectations of those who coordinate its activities was documented in Chapter 4.

Chapter 5 resulted from the employment of an ethnographically led case study approach, which offered an in-depth exploration of impact, motivations and perceptions of RFW volunteers and participants alongside a consideration of the perceptions of those on the periphery of UA activities (i.e. visitors to Wythenshawe Farm). Chapter 6 reflected on areas of divergence between the perceptions of those at the grassroots level and the project coordinators. This included a consideration of some of the working assumptions associated with the project activities, the functioning of the project partnerships, and the experience of volunteers, including ways in which they could be afforded a sense of ownership over their activities. The discussion chapter has sought to draw out some of the key themes raised by the research and to place them in the context of the widening body of critical literature that reflects on the place of institution-led UA initiatives.

This research has explored the motivations of actors involved in an institution-led UA project from a variety of scales. The results demonstrated that RFW staff were motivated by a desire to help the population of Wythenshawe and to change public perceptions of the district, promoting it as a green and pleasant place to live. Volunteers were largely motivated to attend the growing sessions through a desire to help others and to socialise,

which may be considered as an expression of DIY citizenship or quiet sustainability. The research also sought to understand the impacts experienced by those participating in project activities. These were wide-ranging and included the development of growing skills, which in some cases led to participants growing their own produce in their homes and sharing vegetables and plants with neighbours. Participants also benefited from the opportunity to socialise with others and the chance to relax and experience the therapeutic aspects of growing.

The wide range of expertise contained within the partnering organisations was one of the major strengths of the funding bid; however, a number of the partnerships were lost during the early stages of the project, due in part to budget allocation. Results suggest that the project may have had more scope if the association with the partnering organisations had been maintained, which could perhaps have been better achieved through a decentralisation of control and budget. The subject of control was also relevant in terms of the experience of volunteers who may have had a more rewarding experience if they were afforded a greater sense of ownership over the project activities.

Participants at the Macmillan community garden enjoyed a level of autonomy that was not visible at the Wythenshawe Farm growing group. Their collective decision-making, regular attendance and the input of horticultural expertise from particular members resulted in the production of food in an organised and regular manner that was supplied to the local hospital. Although the growing group at Wythenshawe Farm had an assigned coordinator, group members often seemed unaware of the purpose of their endeavours or destination of the produce. The disorganised nature of growing at the park resulted in food being dug up or wasted and, as noted by the volunteers during interviews, very little produce reached the shop at the time of fieldwork.

The history of Wythenshawe shows that the district originated from plans made by well-meaning elites, planners, local authorities and housing groups, who perhaps had an inadequate understanding of the subjects of their grand social intervention. The narrative provided here questions the capacity of interventions from a top-down orientation to understand and access people who may stand to benefit from the activities they hope to provide. Results suggest that it may have been more fruitful to adopt a more supportive

approach in order to assist activities already taking place in the area. The research conducted in preparation for the funding bid recognised the potential for this to be done in Wythenshawe but by holding the budget within one organisation, the involvement of partnering organisations and community groups was severely restricted. Not only did this affect the potential reach and credibility of the project, but it also impinged on its ability to access expertise in specialist areas.

8.2. Limitations

The results presented in this thesis are necessarily limited in a number of ways, which are identified and discussed here. Firstly, the research project was bound by the timeframes of a PhD. The RFW project was funded for five years, beginning in February 2013 and running until February 2018. The results provided in this thesis can only represent a snapshot of the project activities taking place within the timeframe of the data collection period, meaning that developments that have taken place since, have not been recorded. The subject of project legacy is a key area of interest, however there is not scope within the time constraints of this research to assess the lasting impact of the project's activities on the area. The Macmillan community garden did however offer a unique opportunity to observe a project from its very early stages in 2014 through to the end of the project in late 2016.

The research was limited by the number of case study sites, where two key sites provided the main focus: the Macmillan community garden and Wythenshawe Farm. This provided the opportunity to investigate and compare the impacts and motivations at two contrasting growing sites. There are many other forms of UA, which may have provided interesting comparative accounts had the scope of the research project been sufficient to include further exploration. The research explored an institution-led UA project, which was oriented from the top-down. An interesting comparison could be provided through the investigation of a grassroots project, however, the research provided here allow for comparison between different approaches taken at the grassroots level within the RFW project.

The nature of the data collection process means that field notes from observations cannot be independently verified. The use of multiple research techniques including observations (including field notes and photographs), semi-structured interviews and focus groups (which were recorded and transcribed) has sought to reduce researcher bias. The constructivist approach taken here accepts that total objectivity in fieldwork is not a relevant goal, with the research instead focusing on reducing research and cultural bias through multiple methods of data collection and through reflexivity during and following observations.

Although gaining access to research sites was relatively unproblematic and actors at multiple scales were interviewed, there is always more that can be done in order to gain access to a wider pool of opinion. An example of this lies in attempts to interview a manager of Wythenshawe Park. The interview date was eventually secured, however due to various changes in circumstance; the interview was delayed and eventually cancelled. This limited the research in terms of its ability to represent the perspective of the park's management, however this was not an integral part of the research and a diversity of opinion from all levels of the project was represented.

8.3. Recommendations

The following recommendations have been developed as a result of the research conducted in association with the RFW project and are directed towards coordinators of community projects with similar scopes:

1. Ensure the project coordinators are afforded a thorough understanding of the foundations of the project design, the local area and the concepts forming the project through a continuation of personnel throughout the entire process. This could be in the form of representatives from involved partnering organisations or project staff.
2. Involve ambassadors who represent the local community, particularly if the staff members running the project are from different areas and different socioeconomic groups to the target audience.
3. Employ personnel with horticultural expertise.

4. Transfer responsibility to willing volunteers where possible in order to offer participants more agency over project activities.
5. Facilitate clear communication between land users, landowners and intermediaries regarding time frames and intentions with regards to meanwhile sites.
6. Organise regular growing group meetings where local allotment groups, community garden members and specialist growing group volunteers can exchange knowledge, share resources (such as plants and seeds) and update others with progress.
7. Prioritise the provision of support to existing projects over initiating new activities. This could reduce the risk of competition between groups and help in the development of a collaborative environment while making the best use of available local expertise. It may also assist project coordinators in using their time to its maximum potential by removing the need to implement numerous activities, allowing for more focus to be afforded to a smaller number of responsibilities.
8. Allocate portions of the project budget to partnering organisations allowing for the maintenance of more stable partnerships and broadening the reach of the project. Partnering organisations may be more able to commit to particular roles if they are given the resources and agency to do so.
9. Develop a recording mechanism for volunteers who are seeking employment, allowing participants to feel that they are learning useful skills and spending their time in a way that will help them to enhance future applications and to gain employment.
10. Decide whether the project should remain firmly in the area for which the funding has been granted, or if time can be spent outside the area, and be clear about the reasons for this. It is also important that while coordinators attend external events, channels of communication remain open to project partners and participants. Similarly, clarity should be provided regarding the involvement of residents from other areas.
11. Plan for long-term support in terms of finance and resources. This research has demonstrated that UA activities have the potential to benefit individuals and communities but that their capacity to do so is severely restricted by a lack of long-term funding and support. While the RFW project was funded for five years, funding

should be maintained for longer periods in order to allow UA projects to reach their full potential and to be sustainable for the future.

8.4. Further Work

A number of areas for research have been identified during the course of this project. Locally funded projects have a tendency to be spatially exclusive, but the realities of this may be different in practice. While RFW was funded partly due to the high levels of deprivation in the area, a number of volunteers travelled from outside of Wythenshawe to attend project activities and growing sessions. The project team also attended events external to Wythenshawe in order to promote the project to a wider audience. This raised questions as to whether the project should remain spatially exclusive and whether it was beneficial or necessary to exclude volunteers from other areas. An interesting extension of this would involve research into other local projects with geographically specific funding intentions, with the aim of assessing how local “local projects” are in reality.

Although UA has been promoted as a way of producing local, fresh food and bringing food production back into the urban realm, the participants in the case studies presented here did not feel that their diet had been significantly altered through their participation in the growing sessions. This raises questions regarding the ability of UA, particularly in a UK context, to feed its participants.

As noted in Chapter 4, the funding was provided for RFW partly on the basis that the project proposal was in an area of high deprivation. This raises questions as to the benefit of focusing climate change interventions predominantly on deprived areas and the reasons for doing this. In attempting to stimulate pro-environmental behavioural change among poorer communities, there is a need to first address the factors driving particular behaviours, which may indeed be more related to the confines of poverty than a lack of knowledge around sustainability. This also raises questions regarding particular socioeconomic groups and their tendency to exhibit polluting behaviours and the methods used by funding bodies in deciding which groups to target for behavioural change.

Appendix 1: Example of an Informed Consent Form

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Evaluating the Impact of Urban Agriculture in Wythenshawe

Information Sheet for Macmillan Allotment Interview Participants

As a member of the Macmillan Allotment group, you are invited to take part in a study that aims to evaluate the impact of Urban Agriculture in Wythenshawe.

This sheet provides you with all the information you will need about the research so that you can decide whether or not you'd like to be involved. If you have any questions, you are more than welcome to contact the research organisers using the contact details provided.

What is the purpose of the research?

This PhD research is being carried out by Rebecca St. Clair from the University of Salford and is funded by both the University of Salford and the Wythenshawe Community Housing Group (on behalf of the Real Food Wythenshawe project).

The PhD aims to explore the impact of urban food projects in Wythenshawe as part of the evaluation of the Real Food Wythenshawe (RFW) project.

I'm interested in your views of the community allotment, whether it affects the types of food you eat and how your involvement with the allotment has affected your life. The potential impacts of this type of activity are wide-ranging and the discussion may touch upon a variety of topics (e.g. any social benefits, perceived health improvements, changes in stress levels, development of new skills etc.).

This part of the PhD involves you participating in an interview with Rebecca – a discussion that aims to gather your ideas and attitudes regarding the growing site and your involvement with it.

Why participate?

I am hoping to gather information that will draw on your personal experience and in turn, help to inform future urban food projects. My PhD will add to a body of growing research involving food production in the city, and will potentially feed into urban food strategies in the future. I would

be grateful for your help, as it would contribute to a more detailed understanding of the impact of food growing within an urban community and will open up new avenues of research for future investigations.

Do I have to take part?

No. Participation is completely voluntary and it's completely your decision whether or not you decide to take part. If you do decide to take part, you have the right to withdraw at any point (see section titled "What if I change my mind?" below) and you are not obliged to provide any reason.

How will the information be used?

The information gathered will be recorded, transcribed and used to inform my research. The discussion will be analysed for themes that develop during the recorded conversations. The data will be stored on secure, password-protected computers and participants will not be identified by name. The information gathered will be used in academic publications, including my PhD thesis, and will be documented as part of an evaluation report for the RFW project. The data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with the University of Salford's data protection guidelines (see <http://www.infogov.salford.ac.uk/dataprot/> for further details).

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you decide you would like to take part, please make sure you have read and understand the information sheet and then sign the consent form before returning it to Rebecca.

What if I change my mind?

You have the right to withdraw at any point. Please contact Rebecca St. Clair or Dr Michael Hardman (see contact details below) if you have any questions regarding your right to withdraw from the research.

Contact for further information:

Please feel free to contact Rebecca St. Clair, via email: r.stclair@edu.salford.ac.uk or alternatively, please contact Rebecca's PhD supervisor Dr Mike Hardman on 0161 295 2201 or via email: m.hardman@salford.ac.uk.

To discuss the PhD with the Real Food Wythenshawe team, please contact the project coordinator Jacqueline Naraynsingh, on 0161 946 7554 or via email: Jacqueline.Naraynsingh@wchg.org.uk.

If you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted, please contact the College Support Officer, Nathalie Audren-Howarth on n.audren@salford.ac.uk.

Thank you for taking the time to read the information on this sheet.

Date:

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Evaluating the Impact of Urban Agriculture in Wythenshawe

Consent Form

By providing your signature, you are confirming that you have read and understood the attached information sheet and that you agree to participate in this study. You will be provided with a copy of this document and an additional copy will be kept by Rebecca St. Clair.

Please make sure that you are happy with the information provided above and don't hesitate to contact Rebecca St. Clair or Michael Hardman for additional information at a later date.

I agree to participate in an interview and am happy for the conversation to be recorded:

Name of participant (Block capitals)

Signature

Appendix 2: Wythenshawe Farm Questionnaire

Research Questionnaire for Visitors to Wythenshawe Farm

1a) Do you live in Wythenshawe?

| | |
|-----|----|
| Yes | No |
|-----|----|

b) If not, whereabouts do you live?

Area:

c) If so, which part of Wythenshawe are you from?

| | | | | |
|---------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| i) Baguley | ii) Benchill | iii) Peel Hall | iv) Newell Green | v) Woodhouse Park |
| vi) Moss Nook | vii) Northern Moor | viii) Northenden | ix) Sharston | |

2. How did you get here today?

| | | | |
|----------|-------------|----------------|------------|
| i) Car | ii) Bus | iii) Tram | iv) Walked |
| v) Train | vi) Bicycle | vii) Motorbike | |

3. What is the reason that you have come to visit the farm today?

Answer:

4. Approximately how frequently do you visit the farm?

| | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| i) Several times a week | ii) About once a week | iii) About once a month |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|

| | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| iv) Less than once a month | iv) Less than once a year | v) I've never been before |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|

5a) Do you think that the farm is an important resource for an urban community like Wythenshawe?

| | |
|-----|----|
| Yes | No |
|-----|----|

b) Why?

Answer:

6a) Are you aware of the walled garden behind the farm?

| | |
|-----|----|
| Yes | No |
|-----|----|

a) If not, why?

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|--|---------------------------|
| i) I haven't seen the signs | ii) I've seen the signs but it isn't clear whether it's open to the public | iii) I haven't walked that far into the farm | iv) Other, please specify |
|-----------------------------|--|--|---------------------------|

7a) Have you noticed the farm shop?

| | |
|-----|----|
| Yes | No |
|-----|----|

b) If yes, do you ever buy food from the farm shop?

| | |
|-----|----|
| Yes | No |
|-----|----|

c) If no, would you consider buying food from the farm shop in the future?

| | |
|-----|----|
| Yes | No |
|-----|----|

c) Why/why not?

Answer:

8. What sort of foods would you be interested in seeing in the shop?

Answer:

9. Would you like to see more local fresh produce available to buy across Wythenshawe?

| | |
|-----|----|
| Yes | No |
|-----|----|

Additional comments:

10. It's thought that many people have lost their connection with food and where it comes from (e.g. not recognising particular vegetables when they're growing). Do you think that urban farms are a useful educational resource to give younger generations a better connection with food (e.g. pigs in barns and sausages in shop)?

| | |
|-----|----|
| Yes | No |
|-----|----|

Additional comments regarding their use as an educational resource:

11. Do you grow any of your own vegetables at home?

| | |
|-----|----|
| Yes | No |
|-----|----|

12a) Have you heard of Real Food Wythenshawe?

| | |
|-----|----|
| Yes | No |
|-----|----|

b) If so, what do you think of the project?

Answer:

b) Do you think this kind of intervention is needed in Wythenshawe?

| | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------|----|
| Yes | Yes, but not specifically Wythenshawe | No |
|-----|---------------------------------------|----|

About you:

Gender:

| | |
|------|--------|
| Male | Female |
|------|--------|

Age:

| | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 18-25 | 26-35 | 36-45 | 46-55 |
| 56-65 | 66-75 | 76-85 | 85+ |

Postcode:

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